

SECRET SERVICE

OLD AND YOUNG KING BRADY, DETECTIVES.

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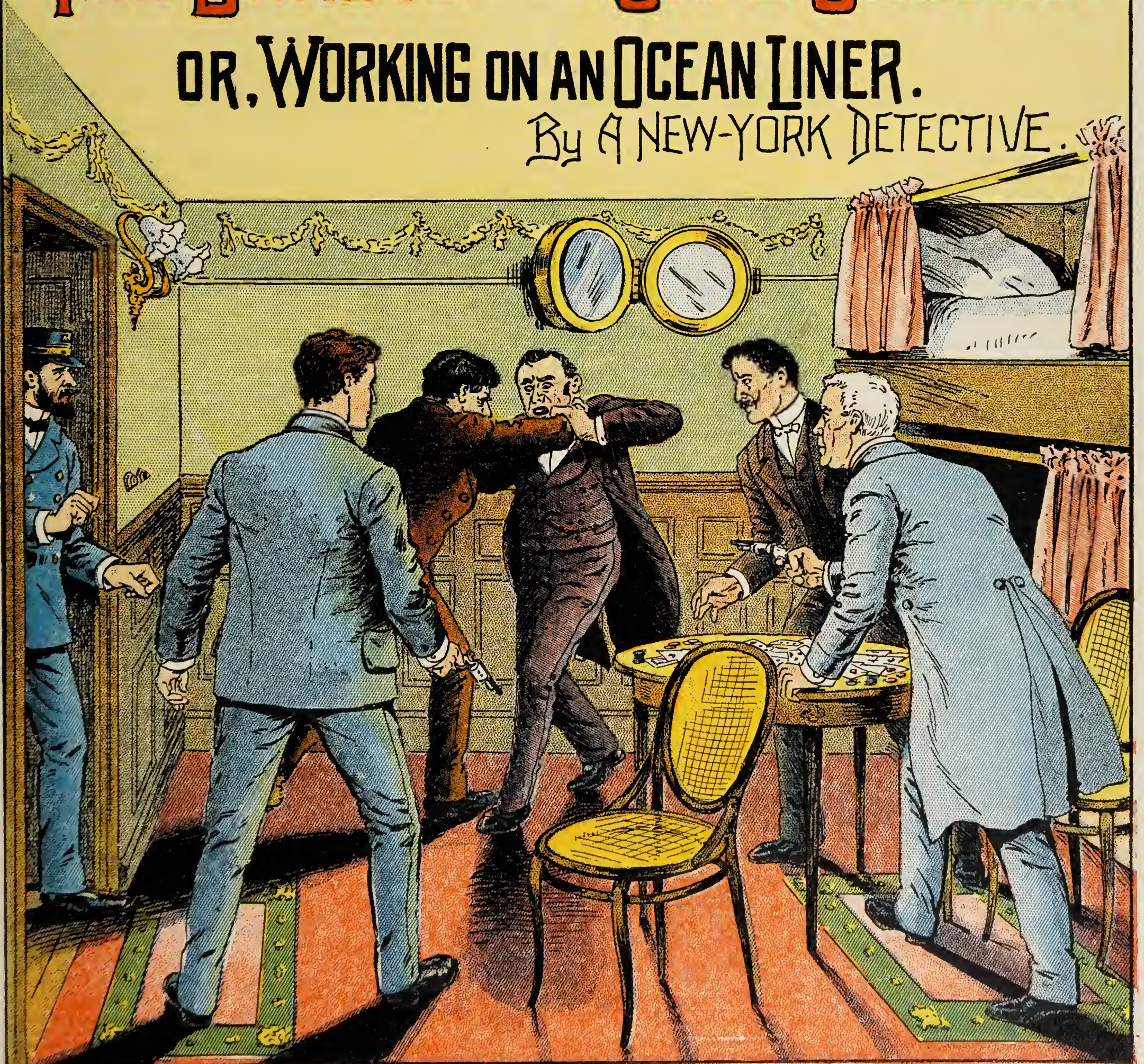
NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 14, 1902.

Price 5 Cents.

THE BRADYS AND THE CARD CROOKS!

OR, WORKING ON AN OCEAN LINER.

By A NEW-YORK DETECTIVE.



"Give up, you thief!" the general shouted, pinning the parson against the partition. Old King Brady sprang up from the card table. "Here's the joker of this game!" he cried, drawing his revolver. "Give up certainly, Doctor, but give me the roll."

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NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 14, 1902.

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The Bradys and the Card Crooks

OR,

Working on an Ocean Liner.

BY A NEW YORK DETECTIVE.

CHAPTER I.

THE MAN FROM MEXICO.

"Seen him, Harry?"

"Not yet, Governor."

"It's high time he was aboard."

"Indeed it is, if he expects to sail for Liverpool on this steamer."

"Right. We shall quit the dock within ten minutes."

"What if he don't?"

"It is nothing to us, Harry. We are at our post, ready for the business we have been paid to do. Should he not come then we go on across just the same."

"I daresay you are right, but it seems such a waste of money."

"Shall you not enjoy the vacation? I shall. Ha, who is that young swell with the rugs and the golf sticks? Keep your eye peeled, Harry. Keep your eye peeled."

The two men who stood leaning over the railing of the fast ocean liner were the far-famed Bradys, the shrewdest and best-known detectives on earth.

Old King Brady was dressed in his usual quaint style, with long-tailed blue coat and brass buttons, and big white hat with broad brim. He also wore a ruffled shirt of the style of many years ago.

Besides these points which Old King Brady presents when he appears in his usual dress, the old detective presented several unusual ones in the shape of jewelry, which he never wore except for a purpose.

In the ruffled shirt the detective sported a great cluster

diamond pin of enormous value, while on the little finger of his left hand he wore a ring with a diamond in it which must have been worth \$5,000 at the very least.

Young King Brady was dressed in strictly up-to-date style, as usual, and he also was rigged out with diamonds in the most extraordinary way.

He had a big diamond in his scarf, a ring on each little finger quite as valuable as the old detective's; besides these he had a diamond collar button, a pair of cuff-buttons each sporting a thousand dollar stone. And as if this was not enough he wore a fob ribbon with a broad gold buckle in which were set three transparent sparklers of great cost.

Take the Bradys together, and they were like a walking jewelry shop.

There was no other attempt at disguise.

Now, do not think for an instant that these diamonds were false, or borrowed for the occasion.

Nothing of the sort.

They were the personal property of Old King Brady.

The detective kept them for use in his business.

He could have covered himself with diamonds if he had chosen, such is his great wealth.

Of course the Bradys attracted a great deal of attention so rigged out.

For an hour and over they had been standing together near the gangplank of the Red Sun line to Liverpool watching every one who came aboard.

"That's not the man," said Harry, as he of the golf sticks hurried up the plank. "Catch Winfield Wygant carrying his own golf sticks and rugs. Governor, you are away off."

"Never thought of that objection. Of course you are right, but who have we here now?"

A carriage having driven rapidly down the wharf, an old man, expensively tailored, with snow-white hair and a large diamond in his shirt-front, alighted.

"Ah, there!" whispered Young King Brady.

"Right, my boy," breathed the old detective. "Careful now. Remember, mum is the word."

"Correct! My stars, what a beauty!"

The old gentleman, whose dark, thin face showed that he was probably a Cuban or South American, turned to help from the carriage a young woman who was as expensively dressed as he was himself.

There was a strong family resemblance between the pair.

The lady had dark flashing eyes and coal-black hair, or she could hardly have been the daughter of the man with the diamond, as, in fact, she was.

Old King Brady consulted his sailing list.

"Senor Raman Hernandez, Miss Hernandez, City of Mexico," he said aloud.

"There he comes at last!" exclaimed Young King Brady in a half-suppressed voice.

A stylish coupe pushed its way to the gangplank.

The door opened and a young mulatto stepped out and held the door back.

A young man immediately followed him.

He was soberly tailored in the very latest fashion, and wore no jewelry at all.

Saying a few words to the mulatto he hurried up the gangplank and disappeared, leaving the waiters to follow with hat-box, rugs, silk umbrellas, and expensive leather grips.

"Yes, that is our man," whispered Old King Brady, who carefully consulted a photograph which he drew from his pocket.

"Look there! What do you think of those fellows?" asked Young King Brady, slightly inclining his head toward a pair who were leaning over the rail a little further along.

One was a tall, military-looking man of about fifty years, who wore much such a hat as did Old King Brady himself.

The other was a thin, spare young man in clerical garb.

"Hard to tell," said Old King Brady.

"Looks so."

Well, it might be; they are well gotten up, though, if it is so."

"That's what they are. They pretend not to know each other, too."

"Can you locate them on the sailing-list, Governor?"

Old King Brady consulted the list.

"General Jonas Suskins, of Savannah, and the Rev. Myron West, of Boston, for a guess," he said.

"I'll bet you on the general, Governor."

"No. I'll run no chances. It is just impossible to tell.

Having said this Old King Brady turned away and went forward.

He seemed to have lost his interest in the arrival of the passengers.

Ten minutes later the Antarctic pulled out into the stream.

The run down to Sandy Hook was performed without adventure.

Having passed the twin lights off the Highlands, the Antarctic ran into a fog.

At dinner the Bradys found themselves seated at the table with "General Suskins" on Old King Brady's left, and the "Rev. Myron West" on Harry's right.

Old King Brady had been quite correct in picking out these people on the sailing list.

They were the very men he had supposed.

Opposite was seated the old gentleman and his daughter.

Of course all eyes were upon the detectives on account of their diamonds.

The diamonds of the old gentleman and his pretty daughter attracted much attention, too.

"Can you tell me, sir, the name of that elderly Spanish gentleman opposite to us?" asked General Suskins.

"No, I cannot, sir," replied Old King Brady with distant civility.

"Beautiful girl, the daughter."

"Yes, very."

"Do you know, sir, that your face strikes me as being very familiar. Can it be possible that we have met before?"

"Here is my card," replied Old King Brady.

The card which he produced bore the name:

"Col. Edw. Wygant, Macon, Mo."

"Colonel, I am glad to know you," said General Suskins, producing a pasteboard of his own.

As Old King Brady anticipated, it bore the name Colonel Jonas Suskins, U. S. A., Savannah, Ga."

"Glad to make your acquaintance, colonel," said Old King Brady. "As we are seat mates we might as well know each other. Allow me to introduce my son. Jack, this gentleman is Colonel Suskins, of the United States army."

"Jack, my boy, I am glad to know you," said the colonel, shaking hands boisterously in front of Old King Brady. "Beg your pardon, gents, but that's a tarnation fine lot of diamonds you sport between you. Haw! haw! haw!"

The Rev. Myron West half closed his eyes, his face wearing a look of holy horror.

"Such language at the table," he said, half aloud, to the gentleman who sat next to him. "The man should be made to desist."

This speech was certainly loud enough for Col. Suskins to hear, and he heard it. "Parson, I'm not addressing my remarks to you, and you have no call to make remarks about me," he said noisily, at the same time leaning half in front of Old King Brady.

For the moment the old detective trembled for his diamonds.

He kept a sharp lookout, of course.

"Sir, you are offensive," replied the clergyman. "Unless you moderate the force of your expressions I shall com-

plain to the captain, and request that you be removed to another table. There are ladies and gentlemen present here, sir."

"The blazes there are! Well, you are not one of the last, in spite of your round collar and buttonless vest, that's one sure thing," the colonel growled.

Matters were growing decidedly warm.

For the Bradys it was extremely annoying.

The old Mexican on the opposite side of the table, who had just drank his coffee, suddenly arose.

"Dis is a scandell," he cried, with a strong accent on the last syllable. "Dis is shameful. For my daughter eet is mucho bad. Ha, you man, you shall not use such language in de presence of my daughter. I——"

He suddenly clapped his hand to his heart, and sank to the floor.

"Ah, padre!" shrieked the girl, kneeling at his side. "Ah, eet ees de excitement, and hees heart ees weak. De doctaire! Bring de doctaire! Ah, shame dat such talk should be allowed to keel mi padre! Oh, oh, oh!"

All eyes were upon them.

General excitement reigned.

"You had better leave us, colonel," whipered Old King Brady. "You are in no way to blame, of course, but still you had better go."

"If that snoozer wasn't a parson I'd whallop the life out of him," growled the colonel, and he withdrew.

Old King Brady hurried around to where the man from Mexico lay.

"I am something of a physician. Allow me, gentlemen," he exclaimed, elbowing his way to the old gentleman's side.

But Old King Brady's services were not needed.

The old gentleman had already revived.

All that Old King Brady did was to help him to his feet.

"I tank you, sir; I tank you!" he said faintly. "My name ees Hernandez. I vill tank you more later. Ha! your card. Yes, tank you. Rita, eet ees much too varm here. Help me on deck."

The Bradys went on deck, too.

"Well, Governor," whipered Harry, as they walked astern, "that was a queer start."

"Yes," replied Old King Brady shortly. "I'm only sorry our man was not in it. I should have liked to see how he would have handled himself."

"What do you think?"

"What do you think, Harry?"

"That it was all a put-up job."

"Ha!" replied Old King Brady with a short laugh. "You can't sometimes most always tell."

"All except the man from Mexico," added Harry. "Of course he was not in it at all."

"Watch him sharply," heplied the old detective. "Usually we agree, but this time I differ from you. I believe the man from Mexico is the head of the whole gang."

CHAPTER II.

THE MAN WHO SMOKED THE CIGAR.

"Miss Hernandez, permit me to introduce my son Jack."

Such a bow Harry had never received from a lady in all his life, but then Miss Hernandez was straight from Mexico according to the sailing list.

Mexican ladies are old-fashioned in the manners, such as few ladies away up north know much about.

Young King Brady sat down beside Miss Hernandez and conversed with her for the best part of an hour.

He found her a most charming young lady.

Not so very young, either.

Harry had not talked five minutes with the pretty senorita before he began to make a series of discoveries which went to show that she was not so young as she seemed.

She surely had helped her own hair out with that which had originally grown on some other lady's head.

Then her face was slightly enameled, and a good deal powdered.

There were at least two false teeth in her pretty mouth, and perhaps more.

Taken altogether Miss Hernandez, although very beautiful, very bright and witty, and exceedingly pleasant to Young King Brady, was not exactly the real thing.

Meanwhile Senor Hernandez was devoting himself to Old King Brady.

The man from Mexico had of his own accord came up and addressed the detectives on deck about an hour after dinner.

The Antarctic had by this time run out of the fog, and the evening was a beautiful one.

The heavy passenger list on the Antarctic made the promenade deck present a gay appearance.

There was something going on all the while, as is usual on an ocean liner.

The Bradys were watching the attempts of the younger portion of the male passengers to get acquainted with the younger portion of the female contingent when the man from Mexico, with his daughter leaning on his arm, came up.

He was most profuse in his thanks to Colonel Wygant for having hurried to his assistance when the attack of heart disease seized him in the saloon.

Having introduced Harry to Miss Hernandez, the man from Mexico handed Old King Brady a cigar, and they proceeded to pace the deck.

Senor Hernandez began talking about his heart trouble; then it was the steamer; then, shifting back to himself; again he began to boast of his great possessions in Mexico.

Indigo plantations, hemp fields, haciendas, and silver mines seemed to have all come his way by dozens.

To hear him tell it Senor Hernandez was a very wealthy man, bound for London for the purpose of selling out his vast interests to an English syndicate, which would give

him the opportunity to better enjoy what little of life remained for a man of his years.

While Senor Hernandez talked Old King Brady, like Harry, was making his little discoveries.

"This man is not nearly as old as he looks," the shrewd old detective said to himself.

There was not a wrinkle in the senor's face except across his forehead and at the corners of the eyes.

"Ha!" muttered Old King Brady. "The light is poor here in the evening, but——"

If there is one thing above another that Old King Brady is a true expert in it is the art of making wrinkles.

Not to punish the reader with a poor pun, the detective could have given Senor Hernandez many wrinkles on the subject.

"Why, if this man is so fabulously rich does he have false wrinkles on his face, the detective asked himself.

Then there was the snow-white hair.

"I'll swear it's a French wig," muttered Old King Brady, "and I give him credit for knowing how to put it on. But the mustache is real."

About this time Senor Hernandez shifted the conversation to Colonel Wygant.

He wanted to know about Macon, Mo., and what business the colonel was in.

Hogs were the first thing the detective thought of, so he made it hogs.

According to Old King Brady, he owned half of Macon, and a good slice in all the surrounding towns.

Senor Hernandez soon began to talk about diamonds, and highly praised the stones Old King Brady and Harry wore.

"You may well say they are the finest you ever saw," said Old King Brady. "I don't believe that my diamonds and the boy's can be duplicated in the United States."

"And I would never dispute you," replied the man from Mexico, whose peculiar broken English it is hardly worth while to attempt to represent in writing. "I never saw their equal anywhere."

"It is just a little weakness of mine to wear them," said Old King Brady. "I suppose it isn't altogether good taste, but when a man is worth his five or six million, who is going to tell him what he ought or ought not to do?"

"That's it," said Senor Hernandez. "Nobody, of course. But, my dear colonel, don't you think the night air is getting just a little too much for old fellows like you and me. Suppose we finish our cigars in the smoking-room? Come, what do you say?"

"By all means," replied Old King Brady.

"I presume we shall find a poker game in progress there?"

"I daresay we shall. Do you know anything of the great American game?"

"Oh, yes. I used to reckon myself a good player, but I never touch cards nowadays."

"How about your son, colonel?"

"Jack fairly loves poker. You will have no trouble in

getting him up against the game. How is it with yourself?"

"Like you, I used to play, but I have not turned a card in many years."

By this time they had reached the smoking room, and Senor Hernandez, opening the door, ushered Old King Brady in.

General Suskins and a stout, German-looking fellow were throwing dice.

The general looked up and scowled profoundly at Senor Hernandez, who drew out a long cigar, and lighting it, threw the match across the table within an inch of General Suskin's face.

"You had better be careful what you do, sir, or you will be throwing another fit!" the general remarked in a most offensive way.

"No offence intended," replied Senor Hernandez gruffly. "I see no cuspidor on this side. I presume there is one on the other; that is why I threw the match."

"Double four," cried the German, shaking the dice-box and making his throw.

"Hold on a minute, Herr Schneider. I want to introduce my friend, Col. Wygant, of Macon, Mo.," said Gen. Suskins. "Colonel, I'm glad to see that you brought our friend here around all right."

"Oh, he was not so very bad," replied Old King Brady. "Shake, Mr. Schneider. I'm very glad to meet you. Allow me to introduce Senor Hernandez, of the city of Mexico. Now, gentlemen, let us shake hands all around and be friends."

Gen. Suskins and Senor Hernandez shook hands grudgingly.

"The best thing to make friends is a game of poker," said the general. "That's what it is. Haw, haw, haw!"

"I never play cards, sir," said Old King Brady.

"Nor I with strangers," added Senor Hernandez, stiffly.

"B'gad, sir, then I'm not like you," protested General Suskins, "for I play with whoever and whatever comes along. Chuck them dice again, Schneider. We might as well go on with our game. I made sure Col. Wygant would be willing to join us, but I see there is nothing doing with this crowd."

The dice throwing proceeded vigorously.

Old King Brady and the man from Mexico sat on the seats and smoked.

Presently the door opened, and in came the clerical gentleman, accompanied by the young man who had come late on board the Antarctic, who had not put in an appearance at the dinner table.

His white, drawn face showed the reason plainly enough.

That the young man was fighting off seasickness any one could tell first look.

"Pah!" exclaimed the Reverend West, turning up his nose. "It's very close in here."

"You don't have to come in, sir!" growled General Suskins. "Of course, you know that."

"Are you addressing yourself to me?" demanded the parson.

"I certainly am. Right to you, the buck who wears his collar and vest backward, sports the dinky hat and the spats on his shoes."

The parson flushed.

"I am the Rev. Dr. West, of Boston," he exclaimed. "If you can't respect my cloth, be good enough to respect this gentleman's feelings. I doubt if he is accustomed to such insults to the clergy."

"Why do you notice him enough to answer him, Dr. West?" demanded the young man. "Why not just let it pass?"

"It is truly scandalous," replied Dr. West. "Just because I happen to enjoy a good cigar, and do not enjoy taking cold in the fresh night air I have to be subjected to the insolence of this vulgar fellow. I'll complain to the captain, I declare I will."

"Do it, parson!" cried Suskins, snapping his fingers in the clergyman's face. "Do it if you dare! I not respect your cloth! Why, man, I respect it only too tarnation well! If it wasn't for your cloth I'd have either given you a lead pill to swallow or have licked the stuffing out of you long ago."

"Tut, tut!" said Old King Brady. "That's fighting talk, general."

"Dot vas fool talk," said Schneider. "Coz vy, it makes droubles, und droubles ish vat ve dond vanter have."

"I would suggest that his reverence leave the smoking-room to the card-players," remarked Senor Hernandez.

"I'll do nothing of the sort, gentlemen!" flashed the Rev. West. "I have as much right here as any of the rest of you. Let me introduce myself to you all. I think, taken as a whole, I am not a bad fellow, but I don't like to be insulted. I am the Rev. Myron West, of Boston, and my friend here is Mr. Winfield Wygant, of the same place. Mr. Wygant, Mr. Schneider, to whom I have already had the pleasure of an introduction."

Schneider bowed clumsily.

"Senor Hernandez, of the City of Mexico, if I don't mistake," the Rev. West continued.

"You are right," said the Mexican millionaire. "I like Boston. It is what you call up to date—most up to date."

He shook hands with young Wygant, who responded heartily.

"And your name, sir?" said the Reverend, turning suddenly upon Old King Brady.

"Well, it is strange," said the detective, "but my name is Wygant, too. Col. Wygant, Macon, Missouri."

"Colonel, I am pleased to know you," said the Rev. West, shaking hands heartily. "Mr. Winfield Wygant, of Boston, a relative of yours, perhaps."

"Mr. Wygant and I are undoubtedly first cousins," laughed the detective.

Young Wygant laughed too, and shook hands.

"It was rather a silly laugh—boyish, so to speak.

Old King Brady particularly noted the fact.

The Rev. West produced cigars and passed them around to every one but Colonel Suskins, who immediately dashed down the dice-box and sprang to his feet.

"Good-day, gentlemen!" he shouted. "You had better start a Sunday-school in here, and be done with it. Now it will be my turn to speak to Captain Cleary and find out whether or no a gentleman can use this room for a quiet game without being insulted by this impudent parson and his cigars."

Thus saying, General Suskins flung out of the room, and banged the door.

"What an ill-natured fellow," said Winfield Wygant, after a few minutes of oppressive silence.

"Ah, yah," said Schneider. "So he vas. Hot-tempered as der teufel, but he got plenty money down py Savannah—yes."

"Is he lucky at the dice?" asked Senor Hernandez.

"Lucky noting," said Schneider with a chuckle. "I vins ten dollar from him all ride. Mebbe he vin him back if he had stayed, but he gone off mad, I don' know. Schentlemens, vill any of you like to shake?"

"Ah, no. Dice is such slow business," said the man from Mexico, shrugging his shoulders.

"I would play you von game of poker only for our freund der dominie."

"Don't mind me, gentlemen," said the Reverend West. "I fully recognize the fact that I am to a certain extent an intruder here. Have your little game of poker, and I will smoke my cigar."

"I should like to play poker," said Winfield Wygant eagerly.

"And you, shentlemens?" asked Schneider, turning to Old King Brady and Senor Hernandez.

"I will try my hand just to oblige, although it is many years since I have played," said Senor Hernandez. "But I must insist that the limit be not more than \$2."

"Ach, vell? Vat den? Ve no vish to run a gambling-house, but schust to play for sociability," Schneider replied, and then he asked Old King Brady to join.

"I'll play to-night, gentlemen, just to make up the set," replied Old King Brady. "But as a rule I don't care for cards."

Thus, in a few minutes a mild game of poker was in progress.

And the Rev. Myron West, sometimes sitting, sometimes walking up and down the room, sometimes standing near the door, remained with them until the lights were ordered out, constantly smoking his cigar.

CHAPTER III.

YOUNG KING BRADY KNOCKED OUT.

When Old King Brady retired to his stateroom he found Harry already in his bunk, but not asleep.

"Well, Governor, how goes it?" he demanded, when Old King Brady had closed the door.

"They have started right in on business," was the reply.

"So?"

"Yes."

"You are certain they are card crooks?"

"I am positive that Hernandez is, and that a man named Schneider is working in with him."

"And General Suskins?"

"Well, I don't know about the general. He and the Rev. West had a fierce altercation, and Suskins retired in bad order."

"That does not look as if he was a card crook."

"No. Yet it may only be a ruse. The one thing which makes me feel that the general cannot be straight is the fact that Schneider claims him as a friend."

"And the parson?"

"I don't know what to make of the parson yet. He certainly smokes a great many cigars."

"How did the game come out?"

"Why, we started in on a two-dollar limit. Hernandez positively would not have it higher. When the evening was about half gone Schneider had it raised to ten, and Hernandez consented—just to oblige. At the wind-up I was forty dollars ahead and young Wygant a hundred and fifteen."

"Ah! It looks bad."

"It certainly does."

"Did the parson have much to say while the game was in progress?"

"Never opened his mouth once after we began to play, but just hung around smoking his cigar."

"Yes, yes. I think you had better stick to the cards, Governor, and let me work on the outside."

"Why, you know we had arranged it the other way, Harry."

"I know. But you are able to keep your temper better than I can, and you always say I am a good ferret."

"It's true. Well, let it be so. Others will undoubtedly come into the game. I don't think I shall have to play every night. Now, how did you make out with the girl?"

"She's tremendous. She simply threw herself at my head."

"Oh, I saw what was coming. They are a game pair."

"Do you suppose they are father and daughter?"

"I doubt it. I am certain that it's many moons since they saw the city of Mexico, if they were ever there."

"Where do you think they came from?"

"Santa Fe, New Mexico, or Tuscan, Arizona. I think the man is an old greaser card-sharp from the far west."

"So do I. The girl had a horrible dialect on her when she first started to talk, but every now and then she would surprise herself by speaking just as good English as you or I."

"Ah, ha! That bears out my theory. Did she try to pump you?"

"To the queen's taste. She asked all about you, your property, and about Macon, Missouri."

"I hope you enlightened her."

"She never got a prettier pack of fairy stories."

"Go slow on Macon. While it is quite a business place in its way, you must not forget that it is only a small town."

"Oh, trust me. Anything further?"

"No, I guess not."

"By the way, what sort of fellow does Winfield Wygant seem to be?"

"Why, he is a perfect gentleman, Harry, but he is absolutely crazy on the subject of poker."

"Has he no control over himself?"

"I don't believe he would have a particle if it came to a pinch. He suggested raising the limit before we had been playing ten minutes."

"Did he show much money?"

"An immense roll, poor fool."

"We shall have to look sharp. I think I shall keep out of the smoking-room altogether."

"Well, perhaps it will be for the best. Good-night."

"Good-night, Governor. Good-night."

A beautiful day followed.

Harry spent the morning improving on his flirtation with Senorita Hernandez.

Winfield Wygant did not appear until noon.

Old King Brady mingled with the other passengers and made several acquaintances among them.

He did not care to confine his attention to those people whom he was particularly interested in.

Reverend Myron West turned up about twelve o'clock, and made himself very agreeable to certain ladies to whom he had been introduced.

Senor Hernandez was reported sick, and did not put in an appearance until late in the afternoon, when he informed Old King Brady that he always suffered terribly at sea, and kept off the water all he possibly could.

During the morning General Suskins and Herr Schneider threw dice in the smoking-room.

Others had started card games by this time, and the general and Old King Brady were several times invited to join them, but both refused.

And so the day drifted on until after supper, when Old King Brady, who had been lying down for a while, was suddenly aroused by Harry, who came hurriedly into the stateroom.

"Well?" said the detective, springing up.

"They are at it again."

"Ha! I suppose so."

"Why didn't you go up?"

"I thought I would give them a chance to start the game without me. Who has taken my place?"

"It's just as you supposed."

"Suskins?"

"Yes."

"Who introduced him to Wygant?"

"Schneider. He spoke in the highest terms of him. He said he was rough but kind-hearted, and immensely rich."

"Where did this introduction take place?"

"On deck."

"Did Suskins try to pump Wygant?"

"He asked him a few leading questions. First if he was the son of Moses Wygant, of Boston."

"He admitted it?"

"Sure. Suskins then remarked 'And you were left sole heir to his millions, I saw in the papers.' At which Wygant laughed, and said 'Yes.'"

"That's enough. He is a card crook, all right. Who proposed the game?"

"Oh, Wygant did himself."

"Was anything said about me?"

"Yes. Suskins refused to play at first. Said he did not want to crowd you out. I told him that if you had wanted to play you would have been up."

"So they are at it?"

"Yes."

"You were in the smoking-room?"

"Just for a minute."

"What's the limit?"

"One hundred dollars. Suskins swore that he never played for less."

"Wygant made no objection?"

"Not in the least. He said he always preferred a \$100 limit. Senor Hernandez objected mildly, but yielded after a minute."

"And the parson?"

"Was not there when I left."

"Suskins made some remark to the effect that he supposed he would have to quit when his reverence put in an appearance, to which Schneider said: 'Dot's fool talk, und you know it. Vat you want ish to stay schust vere you vas.'"

"And what was said to that?"

"Oh, they all laughed, and Suskins dealt the hand."

"Well," said Old King Brady, "I'll get up there, I guess, but I sha'n't play to-night. Don't be quite so attentive to the senorita this evening. Flirt with some other girl, and see what she will do. By the way, you might casually mention that I will persist in sleeping with the stateroom door slightly open for more air, and that on account of the diamonds you think I run a big risk."

"All right, Governor. Your will shall be obeyed."

When Old King Brady entered the smoking-room he found two games of poker in progress, as well as one of bridge whist.

But the principal interest seemed to centre around the table where Winfield Wygant was playing.

This was on account of the keen, excited interest which the young Boston millionaire displayed.

He smoked incessantly, and had already opened champagne for the party twice.

Numerous spectators stood watching the game.

Among others was the Reverend Myron West, still with his cigar.

The Rev. West did not appear to confine his attention to that particular table, however. He seemed to take an interest in all the games.

Old King Brady, greeting the party cordially, sat down to watch the progress of the game.

Wygant had lost several pots, Suskins winning.

At last, about ten o'clock, luck suddenly changed.

When the hand was dealt the Rev. West was behind young Wygant's chair.

He kept putting his cigar in his mouth, taking long draws, and then removing it again.

This manœuvre he repeated several times.

This proved to be a heavy pot, running to the full limit.

Wygant won.

So with the next, and the next as well.

"You are a good bluffer, young fellow," drawled General Suskins. "I like a man who has the courage of his convictions, but I don't know how it would be if the limit was removed."

"I wish it was removed," said Wygant, excitedly. "You'd soon find out that I am game."

"No kick coming here if you want to remove it," said Suskins.

"Same here," grunted Schneider. "Verefer de scheneral goes I follers, yes? I done so many a time und nefer lose noting in de long run."

"I protest against it," said Senor Hernandez.

Wygant pressed the electric button, and when a waiter came ordered more wine.

"Oh, this is on me," said Suskins. "We don't want to be drinking your stuff all the time."

"Nonsense," replied Wygant. "You can pay to-morrow evening. This is my treat."

The wine was drunk and the hand dealt.

Schneider dropped out; so did the senor.

It was Wygant against Suskins.

It was raise after raise then until at last there was three thousand dollars in the pot.

Wygant was fearfully excited.

His hand trembled. The perspiration stood out all over his forehead.

The Rev. West stood behind him when the climax came, and the pot fell Wygant's way.

"I'm done for to-night," cried Suskins, angrily. "There are too many people standing around to suit me."

"If your remarks refer to me, sir, I'll have you know that I shall stand where I please," the Rev. West blurted out.

"I've not the least objection to having you behind my chair, doctor," laughed Wygant, in a wild way. "You seem to be my mascot. Come, join us in a glass of wine."

The wine was passed to the other tables this trip.

It was free to anybody who cared to drink.

Wygant tried to ring into another game of poker after he had drunk several glasses of Piper Heidsieck.

But the players were quiet-looking business men, and seemed afraid of him.

The Rev. West had gone now.

So had Herr Schneider and the Mexican senior.

"They are working him slick," thought Old King Brady, as Wygant hung about boasting of his poker luck. "Somewhere about to-morrow or the day after will be the time they start to get in their fine work."

Wygant staggered out of the smoking-room, and walking aft, leaned over the rail.

A few moments later Old King Brady joined him.

"Beautiful night," he casually remarked.

"Fine for me," replied Wygant. "Did you ever see such luck?"

"You had a good run, but if you will allow an old man to give you a bit of advice you want to be very careful."

"Of what, if you please? When it comes to poker I know my business. I think I have demonstrated that."

"Yes, you have, but you must have heard that the steamers of this line are infested with card crooks. There is always danger in playing with strangers."

"Colonel Wygant, do you presume to instruct me? If it was not for your name I should have something to say."

"There, there! Never mind that. I may be a connection of yours, no matter how distant, but I am also old enough to be your grandfather."

"Does that give you the right to instruct me?"

"Yes, in a way."

"I don't think so."

"I do, then. However, you are your own master. Do as you will, but remember I also bear the name of Wygant. If you get into trouble don't hesitate to call on me."

Old King Brady left him then and started to look for Harry.

Strangely enough Young King Brady was nowhere in evidence.

"Well, well? What's the boy about?" thought the old detective. "He can't have jumped overboard, I suppose."

He paced the length of the deck twice, but could not find Harry.

Many of the passengers were still on deck, but Senorita Hernandez was not among them.

The beautiful Mexican had likewise disappeared.

Old King Brady strolled down into the cabin.

The staterooms of the Hernandez pair were on the opposite side of the ship, and as Old King Brady looked down the corridor where they were located he saw the door of one of them open and Harry come staggering out.

"Good-evening, Mr. Wygant. Call again," Senorita Hernandez said, putting her head out of the door.

Harry responded thickly, and staggered on only to tumble into Old King Brady's arms.

"Hello! Hello!" said Old King Brady in a whisper. "What's doing here?"

"Don't give it away, Governor," muttered Harry, "but I guess I'm drunk, all right."

"It looks amazingly like it. What in the world took you into the senorita's stateroom?"

"It is the senior's stateroom, if you please. The old gent invited me down there, and he has been opening wine."

"Come with me, Harry."

"By gracious, Governor, I've got to go with somebody or I shall blame soon go on my nose."

And this was no dream, either.

Old King Brady had all he could do to get Harry to the stateroom.

"Sit down there on the couch and brace up," he ordered sternly.

He let go his hold and turned to lock the door.

Harry tumbled into the corner all in a heap.

"You had better give me something, Governor," he muttered. "I've got a dose of knockouts for fair."

"That's what you have," said Old King Brady, considerably alarmed. "How many glasses of champagne did you get outside of?"

"Sixteen," muttered Young King Brady.

"Sixteen! Are you going crazy?"

"Who said sixteen? I said six."

"You said sixteen."

No answer.

Harry was snoring.

Old King Brady touched the bell.

"Bring me a small pitcher of strong, cold coffee as quick as you can," he said to the boy who appeared in answer. "Hurry, now. My son is taken with an attack to which he is subject, and only coffee helps him. Don't lose a minute."

A two-dollar bill lent speed to the boy's movements, and the coffee was brought.

Old King Brady poured out a tumbler full and then shook Harry violently.

"Lemme be," muttered Young King Brady. "Why can't you lemme be?"

"Drink this," said the old detective sternly. "Turn it all down now. Be quick."

With unsteady hand Young King Brady drank the coffee.

The effect was marvellous, as it always is when coffee comes on top of any form of morphine.

Young King Brady braced right up.

"Where's that girl?" he demanded, looking around.

"Drunk still?" said Old King Brady dryly. "There's no girl here."

"Oh, is it you, Governor? I thought—I don't know what I thought."

"Just so," said Old King Brady, "but I know what I'm thinking about."

"What?"

"Get up and look in the glass."

"Young King Brady did so."

"Great Scott," he exclaimed. "My diamond scarf-pin is gone!"

"Ah!" said Old King Brady, and he calmly lighted his cigar.

CHAPTER IV.

THE BRADYS AND THE BLACK GHOST.

"Governor, I feel like a fool."

"Live and learn, Harry. You have been up against a pair of slick cards. Only thing that surprises me is that they should have exposed their hand so soon."

"That cluster pin was too much for her, I suppose."

"You are sure she took it?"

"Sure nothing! How can I be sure? It may have worked its way out of my scarf."

"That is certainly possible."

"Of course it is. Gracious, how my head swims! I wish you would let me lie down a little while before I talk."

"Don't think of it. The sooner you begin talking the sooner your head will stop swimming. Pitch in and tell me all. How did this thing begin?"

"Why, I was talking to Miss Hernandez, and I mentioned about your door, as you told me to."

"Yes? And what did she say?"

"And you, too, are careless, Senor Wygant. It is plain that your father must be very rich. You two care so little for diamonds. See, your pin is almost out of the scarf now."

"And was it?"

"Indeed it was; just ready to drop."

"And had she had a chance at it?"

"I don't see how that can be possible."

"Did it ever act that way before?"

"Never!"

"Well?"

"I fixed the pin in its place, and soon afterward left her and began to talk to that little lady with the green waist."

"Yes."

"Later on, I guess about an hour ago, I met Miss H. coming toward me leaning on her father's arm."

"'Mr. Wygant,' she said. 'my father is going to open a bottle of champagne in his stateroom. Will you join us?'"

"Of course, I could not very well refuse, especially as the old gentleman added his request to hers."

"And so you went."

"And so I went."

"The bottle was already there when you reached the stateroom?"

"Yes, and the glasses."

"How many did you drink?"

"Two."

"You said sixteen and then six."

"I didn't know what I was talking about. It was only two."

"Did you feel any ill effects from the first glass?"

"Not in the least."

"It came with the second?"

"Yes."

"All at once or slowly?"

"Slowly."

"Were the glasses removed from the table between the two rounds of drinks?"

"Now that you mention it I recall that they were, and Miss Hernandez washed them."

"Ah! That was the time she got in her fine work."

"I suppose so."

"Was she particularly near you? Did she have a chance to snatch your pin?"

"I can't say. I grew so muddled that I scarcely knew what I was doing. My only thought was to get away and get to the stateroom."

"Was old Hernandez talking at the time?"

"He talked all the time. I can hear his voice ringing in my ear now."

"What was he saying?"

"Oh, he was talking about young Wygant's winnings, and how lucky he was. He wondered that I did not try my luck at the poker table, and more of the same thing."

"I see. Well, there is no doubt that you have been knocked out and robbed, Harry. They are a pair of clever crooks."

"I ought to be kicked."

"Not at all. You were only carrying out my orders. I am inclined to think that the scarf-pin was taken by the woman on the spur of the moment. Don't fret. We shall probably have a chance to search them before the voyage is over, and the pin will then be found."

"Do you think they will bite at the bait and try their luck on our diamonds, Governor?"

"I do, and I think they will come to-night. Best thing you can do is to go to sleep right now, so that you will be good for something later on."

"Well," said Harry, wearily, "perhaps I had."

"Undress and get into your berth. Say nothing of this robbery to a living soul."

Harry was soon in bed and asleep.

Old King Brady read until the time came for retiring.

Then he pulled off his shoes and crept into the lower berth.

The stateroom door he wedged slightly open with his shoe.

He lay facing the door with his revolver under the pillow, where he could put his hands on it at any moment.

"There will be something doing before morning if I know anything, the old detective said to himself.

There had been something doing already so far as Old King Brady was concerned, as some of the card crooks were to learn before morning came.

The bait thrown out by the detective had been snapped at eagerly.

While Old King Brady's diamonds were genuine and Harry's too, the particular scarf pin which had been taken was a fake.

Time drags slowly when one is watching in the dark.

It is not everyone who can keep awake under such circumstances, but long training had made Old King Brady perfect in the art.

The bells rang, and the bells rang, and the bells rang again, and still nothing doing.

The motion of the steamer was regular and soothing.

Even Old King Brady, with all his training, was finding it hard to keep awake.

Still again the bells rang.

"Two o'clock," thought Old King Brady. "This should be about the time."

The thought had scarcely crossed his mind when he thought he heard a slight rustling sound at the door.

It was a bright moonlight night.

Through the port holes came "lime" light enough to enable the detective to make out objects in the stateroom.

Presently he saw an object come gliding in through the door pushed slightly open which was startling enough to "scare the crows."

It might have been man or woman.

It was a figure standing about five feet nine, as black as night about the head, and for that matter black all over, but about the body every bone seemed to stand out with a blaze of phosphorescent light.

Each rib glowed and smoked, the leg bones and arm bones glowed the same way.

But the head was evidently concealed by a black bag drawn over it, and nothing showing but a pair of gleaming eyes.

"Oh," thought Old King Brady. "What a pretty black ghost! Really, this is a very creditable effort. Ha! Just as I supposed."

The black ghost paused just inside the stateroom door for a moment.

Then there appeared in its hand a wet handkerchief and a strong smell of chloroform pervaded the place.

Black Ghost glided toward Old King Brady.

Black Ghost laid the chloroform saturated handkerchief over his face.

Black Ghost stood for a moment watching and listening.

"Oh, you poor fool," thought the detective, whose mouth was tight shut, and nostrils plugged with cotton. "You must think I was born yesterday. There will be something doing in a minute now."

Suddenly a dark lantern flashed, and the black ghost glided toward the wash-stand.

Old King Brady heard a suppressed exclamation.

He had expected this.

There lay several of the diamonds carelessly scattered about.

"You may bring those diamonds to me, if you please," said Old King Brady, in a stern, low voice. "Turn around instantly or I'll put a bullet through the back of your head!"

Old King Brady was on his feet, and the chloroformed handkerchief lay on the floor.

There was a slight scream and the black ghost turned around in lively style.

There was the detective's cocked revolver aimed right between the gleaming eyes.

"Bring the diamonds, good ghost!" said the old detective in a fatherly tone. "You may lay them in the top berth beside my son. Be quick, now, or this thing will surely do business.

The ghost hesitated.

"One—two——" said the detective.

The ghost went to the berths and laid the diamonds in the top one as ordered.

"Now take off that head-geer," ordered the detective.

"No, no!" was the suppressed reply. "Let me go."

"I will not let you go unless you do my bidding," said Old King Brady. "I am determined that you shall have a dose of your own medicine. If you expect mercy at my hands you must do as I say."

"Would you kill me?" breathed the black one.

"Indeed I would, and without mercy. Any man has a right to shoot a burglar—or a ghost."

The hand went up and the bag was reluctantly removed.

"Senorita Hernandez, lie down on that couch!" said the detective with terrible emphasis.

He picked up the chloroformed handkerchief and placed himself between her and the door.

The shoe was gone. He had kicked it away. The door was tight-shut now.

"Oh, spare me. Spare me!" pleaded the frightened girl.

"Even as you would have spared my diamonds. Lie down on that couch."

"But why——"

"Do as I tell you. One—two——"

"Oh, it is infamous!" she cried.

Just the same she threw herself flat on the couch.

With a cat-like spring Old King Brady was at her side.

Down came the handkerchief over the girl's face.

She tried to scream, but the handkerchief was tight pressed.

"Take your own medicine! Take your own medicine!" hissed Old King Brady. "I'll kill you if you make a move!"

It was dangerous work.

Still Old King Brady felt sure of his ground.

The old detective was well up in the matter of chloroform, ether, knockout-drops, and all that sort of thing.

He could tell by the smell that there was not chloroform strong enough on the handkerchief to do the girl serious harm.

In a few seconds she lay there unconscious, and Old King Brady removed the powerful pressure of his hand, which had held her down upon the couch.

"Good!" he muttered. "I think it will be some time before you play the ghost again, sister. The lesson I'm going to read you to-night will be a lasting one, but I must act quick."

He produced strong cord, and tied the girl securely to the lounge.

Then he took away the handkerchief, opened the dead-light, and let in the pure sea air.

"Harry!" he called, shaking Young King Brady. "Harry! Wake up, boy."

Usually Young King Brady would have been on his feet in an instant.

He made comparatively quick work of it as it was, yet it was slow to what it ought to have been.

"Governor! What's doing?"

"I've caught the diamond thief!"

"No!"

"Oh, yes! Look on the couch."

"That thing! What is it?"

"You might well have asked what is it if you had seen it first as I saw it. There was a black bag over the head then, and the sulphur was glowing beautifully. It has quite died away now."

"Why, it is Miss Hernandez!"

"Did you expect it to be any one else?"

"N—no! Of course not. But what ails her?"

"Chloroformed."

"Did you chloroform her?"

"Sure."

"Why?"

"She tried it on me and I gave her a taste of her own medicine. It was the easiest way of keeping her quiet."

"I see. What are these? Your diamonds?"

"Yes."

"How came they here?"

"I made her put them there."

"Have you searched her for my scarf-pin?"

"No, and don't intend to."

"But why? I valued that pin. It was your latest present to me made just before we started."

"Ah, well. I did that for a purpose. What do you suppose it cost?"

"But little from the way you speak now. It deceived me, though."

"Two dollars and a half, Harry."

"Nothing doing! I'll know how to value your presents next time."

"It was only glass and brass, my boy."

"Let the brass and glass pass. What's to be done now?"

"We will quietly look her ladyship in our stateroom. Since she was so keen to get in she shall have the privilege of stopping here while you and I go on an exploring tour. Hustle on your clothes as quick as ever you can."

Five minutes later the Bradys were in the corridor outside the stateroom, with the door securely locked behind them.

"Did you learn anything about these rooms, Governor?" breathed Harry.

"Yes; from the purser this evening. I took him into my confidence."

"General Suskins and the Reverend Myron West are in

the next alley on our side. Winfield Wygant, as you know, is on the opposite side, next alley to Hernandez. I've got the numbers all jotted down on my cuff, so that I sha'n't forget."

"Where first?"

"Hernandez. He is waiting for her return, of course."

"We must look out as we cut across the cabin. It won't do to be seen."

They were on the opposite side like a flash.

Both being in their stocking feet, they made no sound.

"Now?" breathed Old King Brady, whose hand was upon the door knob.

With a quick motion he threw the door open and darted in, with Harry right behind him.

Senor Hernandez sprang up from the couch with a low cry.

He was fully dressed, and the revolver in his hand showed how well prepared for business he would have been if the Bradys had not gone him one better.

They both had him covered when they burst in.

Old King Brady advanced toward him.

Harry stood with his back to the door.

"Gentlemen! In the name of heaven, what means this intrusion?" gasped the multi-millionaire from Mexico.

"Ah, good-evening, senor," said Old King Brady. "I have a black ghost locked in my room which I believe belongs to you. I just called around to know what I should do with it—that's all."

CHAPTER V.

OLD KING BRADY MAKES AN EVENING CALL.

For a few seconds Senor Hernandez never said a word.

"I'm trapped," he muttered at last, at the same time tossing the revolver on the floor near Young King Brady's feet.

"Evidently," said Old King Brady. "Are you making my son a present of a revolver?"

"Cut it short," was the fierce reply. "The woman is my wife. I want no trouble. I'll make it well worth your while to keep dark on this."

"Ah," said Old King Brady. "That's business."

"I'm all business."

"Glad to meet a man of sense."

"Name your price to settle and keep mum."

"Oh, I don't want to be hard on you, senor. I wouldn't like to see you mortgage one of your haciendas to meet my claim."

"Cut it short, I say. I own no haciendas. I never was in the city of Mexico but once in my life, and that was twenty years ago. I've got money, though, and I do business strictly for cash."

Harry pocketed the revolver. Old King Brady lowered the one he held.

"Senor, I'll tell you just what I'll do, and it's only that

or I'll kick up the biggest bobbery about this business that you ever ran foul of since the day you first started out as a card crook."

"What do you mean? How dare you call me a card crook?"

"Oh, I dare a whole lot when I start out."

"Make your proposition."

"Answer my questions first and answer them truly, or I'll send my son to Captain Cleary right now, and I happen to know that he is on the bridge at the present time."

"Well?"

"You are a card crook?"

"Have it so."

"General Suskins is another?"

"That's your idea."

"Harry, you might as well go for the captain," said Old King Brady, raising his revolver again. "I'll just hold this man covered until you return."

"Stay where you are, boy," snarled the senior. "Yes, Suskins is in the business, and I believe you are, too."

"Perhaps you are not so far out of the way. How about Schneider?"

"Oh, he's in it, of course."

"And the Reverend West?"

"Oh, come, that's absurd. Isn't he and Suskins quarreling all the time?"

"Well, any more in the gang?"

"No."

"Sure?"

"I've said it. I never tell my story twice."

"You all three have your eye on young Wygant?"

"And what of that, since you admit he is no relation of yours?"

"So. Well, now hear my proposition. I want to be let in on this deal. The fellow is mad on poker, and I understand he is worth several millions."

"I thought so! Where have you been working, old man?"

"On the Pacific steamers of late."

"And this young chap is really your son?"

"As much my son as Senorita Hernandez is your daughter."

"I suppose so. Well, I can do nothing about it till I talk with the others."

"You are not the head corner of the pack?"

"No."

"Who is?"

"Suskins."

"When can you see Suskins and give me an answer?"

"I can go and wake him up now if you insist, get caught by the steward or some watchman and go spoil the whole game."

"I don't insist on that. To-morrow will do."

"How do you want to come in?"

"Equal partner."

"And your son?"

"Never mind him. He's working another lead."

"I think it can be arranged. Say, your name is not Wygant?"

"No more than yours is Hernandez."

"Did you know Wygant was card crazy?"

"A friend of mine in Boston posted me. I came east on purpose to do him."

"You might have known that you wouldn't be let do it first trip."

"Brother, I might do it yet, and do you too."

"All right. So be it. I'll do all I can. If I fail it won't be my fault. Do you want back the boy's diamond pin?"

"Oh, no. You may keep that to remember him by."

"The deuce you say! Is it——"

"Yes, it is!"

Hernandez snatched the cluster pin from his pocket and put a magnifying glass against it up by the dead light.

"Too dark to see anything," he said. "But I'll take your say so. Here, it better go back to you. No use mussing with it. Besides, it better not be missed."

Harry stepped forward and took the pin.

"That's the time you got left," he chuckled.

"Yes, but you were knocked out, all right."

"I don't deny it."

"We are going now," said Old King Brady.

"How about my wife?"

"Remain as you are, and in a few minutes she shall be returned to you. She was sleeping when we left."

"Sleeping?"

"Yes."

"What the blazes!"

"Oh, I put her to sleep. She tried that game on me, and I turned the tables on her—that's all."

"Well, there wasn't enough chloroform on the handkerchief to hurt anyone."

"I know it. Good-night, Senor Hernandez. We are going now."

The Bradys backed out of the stateroom then.

As they passed the alley in which General Suskins' stateroom was located Old King Brady's attention was attracted by a faint light proceeding from under one of the stateroom doors.

"See that?" he whispered.

"Yes," said Harry. "Whose room?"

"Suskins."

"You are sure?"

"Yes."

"Why not drop in on him, playing off with Hernandez's voice? You can do it, Governor."

"A good idea. We will finish up the job in hand, and then mawke General Suskins an evening call."

They shot back into their own stateroom.

Miss Hernandez had just revived.

"You did well to come," she said fiercely. "I was just going to scream for help."

"Oh, no, you were not, missus," replied Old King Brady. "We have just been to call on your husbaud."

"Husband!"

"That will do. We have reached an understanding. You are to go free."

"I only wish I was free to do as I please, I mean."

"Oh, I daresay; but you see you are not. Take it easy. We shall all be better friends than ever on account of this little call of yours."

Old King Brady then cut the cords and set the woman free.

"Depart in peace," he said sneeringly, at the same time throwing the door wide open.

The black ghost melted away then, and was seen no more.

The Bradys listened for a few minutes, and hearing no sound, sallied forth again to pay another evening call.

This time their destination was the stateroom of General Suskins.

"It's a little more dangerous, Harry," whispered the old detective. "We are very liable to put our foot in it."

"Still, if we should succeed in making him own up it would give us the whiphand of the whole gang."

"That's what it would."

"Who do you suppose can be with him?"

"Schneider, perhaps, though his stateroom is at the other end of the cabin."

"He might be alone."

"True; but I fancy the light under the door means the opposite. I think it comes from a dark lantern on the floor."

"How about West?"

"The West theory seems to be exploded if Hernandez is to be believed. But come, we had better not talk any longer. Let's get on the move."

They crept forward to the stateroom door as noiselessly as if they had been ghosts themselves.

Listening here a minute or so they could distinctly hear voices talking inside.

Old King Brady touched Harry's arm.

"I can hear, Governor."

"Right. Now then, boy."

The old detective tapped lightly on the door.

The voices suddenly ceased.

A moment of absolute silence followed.

"Who's there?" the voice of Suskins demanded at last.

"It is all right. I must see you for a minute," replied Old King Brady, making a very close imitation of Hernandez's voice.

The door was instantly opened on a crack.

Old King Brady was ready for business.

Putting his shoulder against it he forced the door open with such violence as to send General Suskins tumbling over against a man who sat on the couch.

This man was the "Reverend" Myron West.

"Gentlemen, yours truly," said Old King Brady. "My son and I have just dropped in for an evening call."

CHAPTER VI.

THE BRADYS GET ON TO THE WHOLE GAME.

"What do you mean by this intrusion?" demanded General Suskins, in what might be termed a thunderously suppressed voice.

It was the voice of a man who would have liked to have roared loud enough to shake the sides of the steamer, but who scarcely dared to speak.

He dared to act, however, and whipped out a revolver as he sprang to his feet.

But the Bradys were too quick for him.

Old King Brady had him covered before he could get his weapon up, while Harry, just for company's sake, thrust his weapon full in the face of the Reverend West.

"Nothing doing," said the old detective. "We are fighters from Fighttown. Put up your revolvers, and we'll put up ours, but when you draw on us we draw too."

There was a dark lantern upon the floor, just as Old King Brady had supposed.

The detective could see by its light that the face of the Rev. West was deathly pale.

"You may put up your pistol, my son," he said. "I don't think that gentleman will attempt any harm."

"Here goes mine, too," said Suskins, pocketing his weapon. "Now, perhaps you will explain what all this means."

"With pleasure," replied Old King Brady, concealing his revolver. "I am sorry to disturb this little party, general. By the way, considering the way you and the doctor have been quarreling since we left New York, you seem to be on pretty good terms."

"Now, looker here," replied Suskins. "I'm not a patient man, Colonel Wygant. Don't rile me. It's none of your blasted business who I entertain in my stateroom. Question is what do you want here?"

"And a fair question, boys," said Old King Brady. "I'm onto your game. You are merely a lot of card crooks. I'm in the business myself. I want to go into partnership in this Winfield Wygant deal!"

"Thank Heaven!" muttered the "Rev." West.

"Did you speak?" asked Old King Brady.

"I thought you were a pair of detectives," West blurted out.

"This man is new at the business," thought Old King Brady. "He's the walker, as I supposed."

Now the "walker" of a gang of steamer card crooks is usually made up to represent some particularly innocent-looking person.

His business is to walk about behind the players, usually smoking.

By the motions of the walker's cigar the contents of the hand of the victim is exposed.

General Suskins looked Old King Brady straight in the eye.

"Well, by heaven, you have got a cast-iron gall!" he exclaimed. "Why should we let you into this deal?"

"Ask Hernandez in the morning. He'll tell you," said Old King Brady.

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, you ask him. He'll explain."

"Are you a friend of his?"

"One of his best."

"What's his name?"

"What's yours?"

"Don't try to bluff me. I shall get wild in a minute."

"That's bad. I'm licensed to shoot wild men. I might shoot you."

"Go slow, colonel."

"Better put on the brakes, general."

"I want your reason for this move."

"Then I'll tell you. A pretty girl came creeping into our stateroom to-night disguised as a ghost. I jumped on her, tore away her disguise, caught her with my diamonds in her hand, locked her in my stateroom, and then my son and I went to old Hernandez and asked what was to be done about it, should we go to Captain Cleary or should we join the gang."

Suskins gave an exclamation of rage.

"The old idiot!" he snarled. "I knew they couldn't keep hands off them diamonds of yours. I warned him more'n once. Might as well have whistled to the winds, it seems."

"That's what," said West. "Sus, there's no use talking. We've got to let these gents in on the deal."

"I'll be hanged if I will," snarled Suskins.

"Oh, well, then," said Old King Brady, "it is not too late to go to Captain Cleary yet."

"Man," cried Suskins, "do you know what I have a good mind to do?"

"No. What?"

"To draw on you right now. Take my stand and fight it out."

"It won't pay you," said Old King Brady.

"Who are you, anyhow?"

"I am known as Tuscan Jake out in Arizona. Perhaps you may have heard."

"Never; but no matter. Whatever possessed you to come east and book on the Antarctic in the name of Wygant?"

"A tip from Boston, my friend."

"How is that, West?" demanded Suskins suspiciously. "Do you know this man?"

"Indeed I don't."

"If I thought you were playing me false I'd knife you right here and now."

"Hold on! Hold on, general," broke in Old King Brady. "I never saw or heard of this man till I came aboard. You're away off. Wygant has been playing high in Boston for a year past. His guardian—for he has one who controls his father's property, although his mother's large estate came to him outright just a year ago—decided to

send his to Europe to get him away from his gambling associates, of whom I strongly suspect friend West is one."

"You're wrong," said West. "I never knew him till a week ago. Not till he had booked for this voyage."

"Oh, I see," said Old King Brady. "You're the advance man of the gang."

The advance man of a gang of ocean steamer card crooks is the one who examines the bookings on the different liners, and in case of finding any one booked who he or his pals think good game makes a point of getting an introduction to him before sailing day, if possible.

Exactly this had been done by West in the case of young Winfield Wygant, as Old King Brady now learned.

"Yes," replied West. "I am the advance man."

"Hold your jaw, you fool," growled Suskins.

"Oh, come, Sus, what's the sense in holding off any longer?" said West. "We have got to do it. You can see that."

"I don't see it."

"Hernandez does," said Old King Brady.

"And I do," added West.

"It must be," said Old King Brady. "I'll put you all out of business if you don't."

Suskins chewed hard at the long, drooping ends of his tawny mustache.

"Well, I yield provisionally," he said at last. "I'll talk it over with Hernandez. By rights he should be here now."

"He refused to come. He was pretty well broken up about the business. I suppose you know that the woman is his wife?"

"Well, of course I know it. I say I yield provisionally, and that's all I will say until I have talked with my partners. Schneider has to be consulted, too. Now, suppose I do yield, then what? There's no chance for you to come in on the game. I won't have more than us four, for we understand each other. If you insist on coming in then I'll fight anyhow—see?"

"But I don't insist on coming in," said Old King Brady. "I don't care a rap about coming in. I'd rather stay out."

"A clear case of blackmail."

"About the size of it. You wouldn't blackmail me under similar circumstances, general? Oh, no!"

"Of course not," chuckled West.

"Well," said Suskins, "of course I would. I don't deny it. I suppose it has to be. How much of a share do you want?"

"What's the size of the graft?"

"West can tell you better than I. He has sized up Wygant's roll."

"He's got fifty-two thousand in cash with him," said West, "and it is safe to say that what we don't get the London gamblers will swipe inside of a week."

"And this was to be divided even?"

"No. Schneider is a new man," said Suskins, "and so is Hernandez as far as this line is concerned, although he has been working another for some time. West and I get three-quarters, and the other two an eighth."

"An eighth for me and the same for my son, and it's a go."

"It is just like heaving money away," sighed Suskins. "By rights Hernandez should give up his entire share to cover the loss he has brought on us."

"Arrange that to suit yourselves," said Old King Brady. "My terms stand."

"You'll get your answer in the morning," said Suskins. "Now, let's all have a drink."

He produced a bottle of whisky and glasses.

West drank with him, but neither of the Bradys would touch a drop.

"When is the trap to be sprung?" asked the old detective. "Hasn't the boy been allowed about line enough?"

"We shall wait until the day before our arrival at Liverpool," said Suskins. "It is always the best way not to give them too much time to talk."

"I don't know but what you are right," said Old King Brady. "Well, gentlemen, I suppose we may call this little business settled?"

"Let you know in the morning," snapped Suskins. "I want to snatch a little sleep. I wish you would leave us now."

"Right," said the detective, "and so we will."

Upon that the Bradys quietly withdrew and went to bed themselves.

Not a word of all these midnight doings got abroad next day.

It was decidedly late before Miss Hernandez appeared on deck, but when she did she was as blooming as ever.

Young King Brady rushed forward and placed her steamer chair.

"Do we continue our flirtation?" he asked, in a low tone.

"To my disgust, yes. Such are my orders," was the ungracious reply.

"Why to your disgust?"

"Because I hate you."

"Ah, that's not fair. I don't hate you."

"Pay me no compliments, or I'll break away from you and take the chances," said the lady fiercely.

"Good-morning, Miss Hernandez," replied Harry.

Raising his cap, he walked away.

Meanwhile Old King Brady was having better luck with General Suskins, who appeared on deck just about the same time.

"General, how are you?" cried the detective, thrusting out his hand. "Fine bracing morning this. Hope you rested well last night."

"Ah," said the general, shaking hands with a grip which nearly crushed the detective's hand. "Ah! Yes, colonel, it is a fine bracing morning. By the way, that little matter of ours which we had under discussion stands just as arranged."

"Good!" said Old King Brady, "and here comes Mr. Wygant, looking a little the worse for last night's champagne. Good-morning, Mr. Wygant. How are you feeling

this morning, sir? Are you going to give General Suskins his revenge to-night?"

"Give it to him right away after lunch," said Wygant. "I'm always ready for a game of poker. You will find me game to the last, gentlemen. Don't any of you worry your heads about me."

"It would be right for us to arrest the whole gang at once, and put an end to their villainy," said Old King Brady to Harry, when they were alone. "But we may as well let their plans develop, and when we do nab them we'll have the best kind of evidence to convict them. They can't fleece anyone while we are aboard, you know, and we can amuse ourselves with them till we reach the other side, to relieve the tedium of our voyage."

Young King Brady agreed with his partner's views.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GREAT POKER GAME.

It turned out a most unpleasant day the fourth day out. The rain fell in torrents, and a gale something more than mild blew from the northeast.

For a steamer like the Antarctic there was, of course, no danger.

Still, the storm made everybody uncomfortable.

Almost every lady on board the steamer had been put temporarily out of health, and not a few of the gentlemen were in the same fix.

During the morning the bridge-whist men held the fort in the smoking-room, and the card crooks did not appear.

They had been up to the limit the night before, and the champagne flowed freely.

The luck of the game had been pretty evenly divided.

Once Winfield Wygant made a comparatively heavy loss, but at the close of the sitting he retired from the table full of champagne and triumph, for he was \$2,000 ahead of the game.

"It takes me to show you fellows how to play poker," he kept saying. "I'm the boy to do the business," and so on through a whole line of boastful phrases.

When the game was finally over the "Rev." West had to almost drag him to his stateroom, he was so drunk.

If it had not been that the card crooks were not ready to jump on the foolish fellow he would undoubtedly have been fleeced of his last dollar that night.

During the early hours of the morning Old King Brady lay in his stateroom reading, and actually enjoying the roll of the big liner.

Harry remained in the smoking-room ready to give the old detective warning at the first coming of the card crooks.

At ten minutes past eleven there came a slight tap on the stateroom door.

"Come in!" Old King Brady called, and Senor Hernandez responded.

He bade the detective a gruff good-morning, and sank into a chair between the washstand and the berths.

"This is a beast of a day, isn't it?" he remarked.

"Not very pleasant, that is certain," said Old King Brady, wondering what was coming next.

"We let the guy have a good bit of rope last night."

"That's what you did. I should say the time had about come to pluck him."

"That's what I say, but Suskins is afraid that he'll raise too much of a breeze."

"He can hardly do much. I can bear witness that he kept trying to have the limit done away with last night. He's a poor player, anyhow, and even in a fair game would stand little show against your crowd."

"That's true enough. Told the general so last night. We could almost do away with West altogether and skin him on a fair deal."

"Suskins, I suppose, won't try it."

"No, indeed! He will hear of nothing of the sort, and that brings me to my errand. What do you think of Suskins? Honest Injun now, right between ourselves. You have shown yourself a square man in letting up on me when you might have made trouble. I'm that worried that I hardly know which end I am on."

"What about? You have nothing to fear from me."

"Oh, I know. That's all right. I'm not worrying about you one bit. It's Sus."

"Well?"

"You don't know, maybe, that the scheme is to let him scoop in the whole pot and divide?"

"No. Is that so?"

"Indeed, it is so. Now, looker here, colonel. There is bound to be nothing doing in this business so far as you and I are concerned. It's Sus and West. They are old pals. Schneider was hooked on for the occasion. I belong on the Cunard line, but they ran me off of there. Suskins saw that I had booked on the Antarctic, and guessed it was me, so he came to me and made a deal. He's right down on me on account of that little affair the other night, and just as sure as we are sitting here talking he will put up some job to do me and you too out of the share we are supposed to get. You can gamble on that every time."

"I wonder if it is so," mused Old King Brady.

"Sure it's so. I'll stake my life on it. I haven't watched him and West for nothing. I know!"

"What do you want me to do?"

"I want you to watch 'em close. I saw Sus talking with the boatswain this morning. I'm sure there is something in the wind."

"How could the boatswain help him?"

"Give it up, but he's a man who wastes no words. I only want to warn you. He may make a jump for the graft this very day for all we can tell, and that's the time we want to look out. He'll never tell you when he's going to begin."

"I'll keep my eye peeled."

"Do, and speak to your son about it. He's outside of the game altogether, and has a better chance to watch than either you or I."

Senor Hernandez then withdrew.

Old King Brady was deeply impressed by what he had said.

"That fellow is no fool, whoever he is," muttered the detective. "I will speak to Harry, and he shall keep watch. If it is as Hernandez suspects, it is up to Harry to look after that end of the game."

Shortly after twelve o'clock the card crooks began to gather in the smoking-room, and at half-past Winfield Wygant came in.

He had already been imbibing, and was more boastful than ever.

Old King Brady looked at him in disgust.

"It is fortunate for that young man that I am hired to protect him," he said to himself. "I should take particular satisfaction in letting him be fleeced by these card crooks to the extent of the last dollar he has about him. Insolent young beggar! He needs the lesson badly enough."

Wygant barely nodded to the detective.

"Well, general," he cried, sitting down opposite Suskins, "this is just the kind of day for us. Nothing to keep us on deck; everything to keep us inside. This is the day I'll give you your revenge."

"Glad to hear you say so," replied Suskins grimly. "You hit us hard last night, my boy."

"Well, so I did, rather. Luck must take a turn sooner or later, though."

"If it ever turns my way, as it has some times in the past, I'm afraid your purse would hardly be able to stand the pressure, youngster," the old card crook dryly remarked.

"Never you mind about the length of my purse," retorted Wygant. "I'm game for all the losses this trip will ever bring me, and don't you forget it. What's the matter with our starting in right now?"

"Nothing," replied Suskins. "I'm ready whenever you are."

"We might run out a few hands before lunch, and start right in again afterward."

"I'm with you. Does that suit you, Mr. Schneider?"

"I was ready for anything vat suits you, scheneral."

"And you, senor?"

"It is all the same to me," replied Hernandez. "I am beginning to get interested in this business. So far the winning has all gone one way. For my part, I should like to see a change."

"I'm not kicking," chuckled Wygant, picking up the cards. "But there's one thing, the limit must be removed. It's as broad as it is long, so what difference does it make?"

"Well, I'm agreeable," said Suskins. "Since you insist, so be it."

"I was with de scheneral," added Schneider.

"Well, well! You all seem to be against me," added Hernandez. "Be it so."

The game started a few minutes later.

We do not propose to describe it.

Poker is only interesting to those who are playing it.

This game, as it ran up to the hour of the lunch bell, went all one way.

There was nothing doing for Suskins. Schneider won a pot of \$60, Hernandez came in for \$150, which he afterward dropped with \$50 more added, but the wonderful Mr. Winfield Wygant retired from the table over \$1,000 ahead of the game.

Young King Brady was not seen at all after the game began.

Old King Brady smoked cigar after cigar and quietly observed the game from his corner.

The Rev. Myron West looked in once, leaving the door slightly ajar, and so allowing the wind to blow it wide open, and let in a dash of rain.

"Shut that door!" shouted Suskins in a most offensive way, adding, "Some people must have been brought up in a saw-mill, I guess!"

The "Rev." retorted, and flounced out of the smoking-room, closing the door behind him with a bang.

Evidently his services were not yet needed.

In fact, he did not put in an appearance again until late in the afternoon.

It was what one might term an even run all the afternoon.

At dinner time Suskins was a couple of thousand ahead, and Hernandez and Schneider as many hundreds.

Wygant took these losses with a coolness which smacked of bravado, and ordered up champagne.

It was eight o'clock when the poker party gathered in the smoking-room again.

One thing to be said about Wygant, he was certainly a good sailor.

In spite of all the wine he drank he showed no sign of seasickness whatever.

It was the same with Suskins and Hernandez, but Schneider really had all he could do to hold his own, and there were times when Old King Brady thought he would have to give up himself, old sailor as he was, the Antarctic rolled so.

At eight twenty Wygant held a hand which certainly ought to have taken the pot, which held something over \$3,000, but when it was opened there was Suskins with his four aces, and from that moment the luck changed.

West came in just before, and paced up and down with his inevitable cigar.

Besides the "walker" were several onlookers really interested in the game, for rumors of the great wealth of the "General," the "Senor," and young Wygant had spread all over the steamer, and it seemed to be generally understood that this stormy night was to witness the highest play.

After the loss of the \$3,000 pot Wygant began to brace up, and there was no more ordering of champagne.

Actually he was not yet behind the game, but he was but little ahead, and the long-looked-for turn of luck had come.

And that night it turned and turned, and kept on turning as the Rev. Myron West walked with unsteady step up and down the smoking-room and turned his cigar.

Old travellers by the line who looked in from time to time declared that it was the heaviest game of poker ever played on the Antarctic.

Thousands melted away before young Wygant's astonished eyes.

At half-past nine he was \$22,500 to the bad, most of which had been won by Suskins.

The more he lost the more excited he became, and the pots grew bigger and bigger.

Ten o'clock came.

The steamer was rolling terribly.

The bridge-whist fellows had given it up.

Two of their number had been knocked out by seasickness, and the others gathered around to watch the great poker game.

Old King Brady, with his hat drawn down over his eyes, appeared to be half asleep most of the time, although occasionally he would take a puff at his cigar.

In reality he was trying to get on to West's curves.

It was hard work, though.

Sometimes West would hold the cigar in his right hand, again in his left. Now it would go between his teeth, and there would be two puffs; again it would be only one, and so it went, every movement meaning something about the condition of Wygant's hand, which he always contrived to see.

At ten minutes past ten Wygant's losings amounted to over \$34,000.

Then he drew a hand which certainly gave him the right to bluff.

And bluff he did.

The pot was raised and raised and raised again, until it stood for \$15,000.

Hitherto it had been the custom to cash in at the end of each hand.

This Suskins had insisted upon at the start, and the rule had been rigidly adhered to ever since.

Wygant had displayed his roll each time, and seemed to enjoy doing it.

He was called upon to do it ahead of time now.

"How do I know you are good for that amount, Mr. Wygant?" he asked, after the last bet. "Luck has been pretty heavy against you to-night."

Wygant flushed to the roots of his hair.

"I'm good for twelve millions and more, General Suskins," he said proudly. "Do you mean to insult me, sir?"

West had just signalled his hand, and Old King Brady distinctly saw Schneider pass a card under the table, but then Old King Brady was looking and the others were not.

"Ah!" replied Suskins, "but that cuts no ice. Poker debts are sometimes hard things to collect of millionaires, particularly young ones."

"I'll prove, sir, that I am good for that pot!" cried Wygant, and out came the roll again.

"Witness the count, gentlemen," he cried. "Dr. West, you shall see what there is here."

"A hundred dollars short!" he added a minute later.

Something seemed to catch in his throat.

"Well, general," he said. "I'll own up that I haven't got the dough with me, and that if you take the pot this ends the play for to-night. Shall we reduce the bet to my limit, or how?"

"Let the limit stand," said West, throwing down a hundred dollar bill. "You can give me your I.O.U. for that later on."

"Right," said Wygant, trembling all over. "Now, general, what do you say?"

"Let her go!" growled Suskins, throwing down his cards.

Wygant turned deathly pale, and threw down his hand and the roll of bills.

"That ends it," he said faintly. "This game is closed. West, order champagne!"

The great poker game was over, and Winfield Wygant stood over \$52,000 to the bad.

CHAPTER VIII.

MAN OVERBOARD!

It was all over.

The crowd melted away from the smoking-room in a hurry.

No one particularly cared to be identified with the affair.

"It is safe to say that nine out of ten believed that Winfield Wygant had been victimized by card sharps.

Yet so cleverly had the swindle been worked that no one who had been alive to every move could say that Wygant himself had not alone been to blame, and the detective wanted him to be taught a severe lesson, hence he did not warn the youth or stop the game.

The wine was drunk before the party separated:

Hernandez slipped out with the onlookers.

He had a thousand or so, and it is probable that he meant to freeze on to that.

Schneider went next.

Wygant talked boastfully for a few minutes, and promised to be revenged on Suskins if he would meet him at his London hotel.

"That's all right," said Suskins, "and I'll do it providing you don't play the baby act in the meantime."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded Wygant fiercely.

"That most likely you will be complaining to Captain Cleary that you have been swindled."

"Do you mean to insult me?" cried Wygant, grasping a champagne bottle.

"Gentlemen! Gentlemen! For Heaven's sake no fighting!" interrupted Dr. West. "I can bear witness that no game was ever more fairly played, and that Mr. Wygant did away with the limit himself."

"Good-night," said Suskins.

He arose and left the smoking-room.

West slipped out after him.

A gust of wind swept the rain in through the open door.

But Winfield Wygant did not seem to mind.

All of a sudden his bravado seemed to have deserted him.

His head fell forward upon the table, and he buried his face in his hands, giving vent to a heartrending groan.

Perhaps he did not know that Old King Brady was still sitting in the corner.

Certainly he did not know that the old detective had been hired to make this trip across the great pond solely on his account.

Many times he groaned.

The detective could hear him muttering to himself.

"Ruin—thousands lost—disgraced forever!"

These were some of the words.

It looked as if this was a more serious affair than those who had watched the game supposed.

Old King Brady arose, and laying a gentle hand upon his shoulder, said:

"Mr. Wygant, will you let the old man say a word?"

Wygant sprang to his feet as though shot.

"I did not know you were here!" he exclaimed. "Keep your pity to yourself. I want none of it. Will it bring my money back?"

"Perhaps pity won't, young man, but a little common sense may."

"What do you mean?"

"Simply that you have been swindled out of half a hundred thousand—that's all."

"You don't know that! It might be true, but nothing of the sort can be proved."

"It is true, and it can be proved."

"By whom?"

"By me."

"Who are you who knows more about my business than I know myself? This is the second time you have interfered with me."

"I know all about you, Winfield Wygant. Among other things I know that this game of poker is a very serious matter to you: that if it comes to the ears of the executors of your father's will, and it is bound to, they will be forced under that will to divide ten millions between ten New England hospitals instead of turning over said millions to you in five years time."

"If you know that then you are a paid spy of my father's executors, put on this steamer to watch me!" shouted Wygant, again clutching the neck of an empty champagne bottle as though to throw it at the detective's head.

"Man overboard! Man overboard!"

At the same instant the soul-stirring cry was heard on the deck outside.

It was a good chance for Old King Brady to draw off, and that was just what he wanted to do.

He had waited only to declare himself to Wygant as one who knew the terrible risk he had run in allowing himself to yield to his mania for "the great national game!"

"There's something wrong outside," he cried. "We will postpone our quarrel till later. Let's see what it is!"

He flung open the door and dashed out upon the deck.

Wygant followed him.

The deck hands were flocking aft.

A few passengers had run out of the social hall.

"Man overboard! Stop the steamer! Send out a life-boat!" someone was shouting.

Old King Brady recognized the voice as that of the Rev. Myron West.

Then above the gale came another voice, which rang out clear and firm:

"This steamer is stopped for no man to-night! No boat can live in such a sea!"

And the Antarctic forged steadily on her course.

"What is it all about? Who is the man?" demanded Wygant, clutching Old King Brady's arm.

"I can't tell you."

"But surely that was Dr. West who spoke."

"No one else than the man you have known as Dr. West."

Old King Brady began to smell a rat.

He was not a bit surprised when the Rev. West came hurrying toward the bridge, shouting:

"Captain Cleary, General Suskins has accidentally fallen overboard. Will you do nothing to save him? In the name of common humanity, sir, I demand that you send out a boat."

"In the name of common-sense I shall do nothing of the kind," was the stern reply.

"But this is barbarous," persisted West, prancing around in the rain. "The General was taken suddenly seasick. Leaning over the rail he lost his balance and fell overboard. Can nothing be done to save him?"

"Nothing," said the captain, coming down off the bridge, having turned the steamer over to the third officer. "Nothing at all."

"It's an outrage!" cried West.

Several others said as much.

Winfield Wygant said nothing aloud, but he whispered to Old King Brady, his voice barely audible above the storm: "And my \$52,000 went with him. What an ending to that wicked game!"

"Don't you presume to instruct me in my business," cried Captain Cleary. "There are other lives in my charge here. I don't risk them to save the life of a card crook or at the request of one!"

"What do you mean, sir?" demanded West mildly. "I am a minister of the gospel."

"Minister of——"

The wind blew away Captain Cleary's next word.

What followed was plainly heard by all.

"Retire to your stateroom, or I'll put you in irons, sir! I have the best of reasons for believing that you are a card crook yourself, and stood in with that fellow to rob this young man."

West drew away his face, as pale as death.

"How much money have you lost at the poker table to-day?" the old sea-dog demanded, turning upon Wygant.

"Fifty-two thousand dollars," was the reply.

"You're a fool, then. You've no doubt been swindled. But don't you complain to me. I've had ye well watched. It was all your own doings. I believe on me soul that this is a case of dog eat dog, and that you are a card crook yourself!"

Whercupon Captain Cleary strode away to his stateroom, leaving the passengers to size up his action as they pleased.

Old King Brady drew away, but continued to watch Young Wygant.

The Rev. West had vanished.

Neither Hernandez nor Schneider had been seen at all. All eyes were on Wygant, and he presently slunk away and hurried down below.

Old King Brady ventured a few inquiries among the crew.

He soon found that it was West who had raised the cry. No one had seen Suskins go overboard but the "walker" of the gang.

Old King Brady went directly to Senor Hernandez's stateroom, and knocked on the door.

It was cautiously opened by the wife.

"Oh, is it you," she said. "Well, come in and be quick. We want no attention attracted to us now."

Hernandez was sitting on the edge of the bunk in the dark.

"Well, what did I tell you, colonel?" he said fiercely. "What about being bilked now?"

"We are there," said Old King Brady dryly.

"I should say we were!"

"How did you hear?"

"West looked in and told me. It was all I could do to keep from jumping at his throat and wrenching the money from his pockets."

"Do you think he has it?"

"Why not?"

"Suskins is not the man to trust it to anyone. Of course he never went over the rail."

"No more than you or I."

"Probably the boatswain has stowed him away somewhere as you suspected."

"That's what. Was your son on the watch?"

"Yes."

"What does he say?"

"I haven't seen him yet, but he'll report in time. No use to try to look him up."

"Not a bit. It would only make a bad matter worse by spoiling our last chance. Nothing can be done to-night."

"I agree with you. Did you keep that money you won?"

"Did I? You bet your socks I did. That was a mistake. I did a little bluffing on my own account. By Heaven, a man is entitled to expenses at all events."

"West must be closely watched," said Old King Brady, "and I don't want to undertake it. Will you?"

"She will," replied Hernandez, jerking his thumb toward his wife. "She's got him on the string already. Trust her."

"Is he really a parson?"

"Was once, I believe. Why do you ask?"

"It will make him more timid. He probably has some few friends who still believe in him even if he has fallen from grace with the majority of them. Work him up, Madam Hernandez. We have two days yet. If he has the bag we want it—that's all."

"You are all right," said Hernandez. "Say, we must work together coming back."

"I am a poor poker player, senor."

"Oh, you are not so bad. I watched your play. What I need is a walker. I would never have got caught on the Cunarder only mine went back on me at the last moment and I tried to work the raffle without one and failed."

"Well, we'll see about that later," said Old King Brady. "What we are most interested in now is the recovery of this cash. I'm going to have it if it takes a leg."

"There's only one way," said Hernandez, "and that is to get it. Once we have it in our clutches neither Suskins nor West will dare to interfere."

Old King Brady returned to his own stateroom, hoping to find Harry, but he was not there.

"I'll tackle Wygant," he said to himself. "I'll go straight to him and declare my hand. The time has come now."

The thought had scarcely crossed his mind when there came a low knock on the door.

"Who is there?" demanded Old King Brady, half fearing trouble.

"It is I, Colonel Wygant," was the answer.

Winfield Wygant's was the voice which spoke.

Old King Brady immediately opened the door.

CHAPTER IX.

YOUNG KING BRADY AND THE BOATSWAIN.

The Bradys had both been deeply impressed by what Hernandez had said about General Suskins having been seen talking to the boatswain.

They talked the matter over, and came to the conclusion that it meant either one or two moves on the part of the leader of the card crooks.

"It is either a case of disguise and working in with the hands, or of stowing away," Old King Brady said.

"Allowing that it is so, what's doing?" Harry asked.

"Bribery," said Old King Brady.

"I'll give him my cluster diamond pin to let me on the inside."

"Don't be absurd! There's no class of men in the world outside of regular experts who know so much about diamonds and their value as the officers on our ocean liners."

"Boatswains?"

"If not, then boatswains have brains, and would be sure to consult somebody who does know. No, Harry, in a case like this nothing but cold cash will carry the day. You know we were told to spare no expense."

"I'll put it right up to him, then," said Young King Brady. "I'm glad I've got something to do in this case at last."

"Your work with Miss Hernandez gave us the keynote to the whole situation," said Old King Brady. "You need not growl."

Harry went for the bo's'n that rainy morning about ten o'clock.

It is no easy matter to get a chance to talk to the bo's'n of an ocean liner.

For a passenger, we mean.

On a big steamer it is a case of everyone minding his own business.

For the bo's'n to be talking with the passengers would be scarcely allowed.

Harry took the bull right by the horns.

Passing the bo's'n he slipped a gold piece into his hand and said as he walked slowly on, "I want to talk to you. It will pay you. Be here when I come back and tell me where while I pass."

The bo's'n's hand closed on the coin and he merely nodded.

Young King Brady saw that he had struck a bo's'n who knew his business.

He made another turn of the deck and got the word:

"Ten minutes. Stand behind the chain-house on star-board side."

Young King Brady was there on time.

It rained, but he did not mind that.

Here he waited fully twenty minutes and nothing transpired.

Then suddenly the chains began to rattle, and through the airhole he heard a voice say: "Well, are ye there?"

"Yes," said Harry.

"Well, what's the money for?"

"Business," said Harry. "Whatever he gave you to do it, I'll give you a hundred dollars more."

This was taking the bull by the horns with a vengeance.

It was jumping at the conclusion that there might be a conspiracy where as a matter of fact none might exist.

Silence followed for a moment.

"He said twenty pun', an' do you say fifty?" was whispered through the airhole.

Then the chains rattled harder than ever.

"He's a liar, and I've got him," thought Young King

Brady. "I'd like to bet that Suskin's bid was only ten pounds."

"Yes, I say fifty," he called, "but you must tell me all."

"When do I get the stuff?"

"Half before you leave here, half when the job is done, and the ten dollars I gave you just now thrown in."

"It's a go."

"Tell me what his scheme is."

"Sure, he expects to pluck that sucker in a night or two, and then he goes overboard in your eye."

"I see. A case of shoving off and working in with your men?"

"You bet your bloody life, no. I do business on me own account. I don't divide up with my men."

"Right. Then it's a case of stowaway, I suppose?"

"You suppose right. What am I to do for you?"

"Make the way clear for me to follow him."

"It can be done."

"It's the big man with the goat's beard. That's the one I mean."

"And it's the one I mean. I only have one job on hand this trip."

"You will do it?"

"Sure, if you wish it, but you must take all chances. He looks to me like the kind that would shoot."

"So am I if it comes to that."

"You don't look like it, then."

"When is the time?"

"I'll tell you later."

"Where is the place?"

"That I won't tell ye. Ye'll have to depend on me for that."

"Suppose I want to come out before he does, what then?"

"Pass me in an hour and I'll tip you a paper telling you just what to do."

"All right. I'm going to pass my hand around now, and there will be twenty five pound notes in it. I suppose you know what to do with them."

"Pass 'em along."

It was done.

The chain stopped rattling

The bo's'n had vanished.

Young King Brady moved on along the deck in the rain.

"I guess I am on the trail, all right," he said to himself, "and I don't doubt that it is as dangerous a one as ever I struck in my life."

During this hour Harry saw Old King Brady and told him how matters stood.

He got no opportunity afterward to speak to the old detective.

Shortly after the end of the hour as he was passing the chain-house again a note was slipped into his hand.

It was a wretched scrawl and read as follows:

"Ter-night is the night unless somethink turns up to hinder. he goes by the h'iron door third as you go h'aft

starboard side. 'twas to 'ave been locked, but it will be left h'open. I've 'ampered the lock you can get out h'any time."

This was very unsatisfactory, of course.

It fixed no definite time for the affair to come off. It did not even state the place where Suskins expected to stow away; yet such as it was it was to the point, and showed that the boatswain meant to be as good as his word.

For Young King Brady there was nothing for it but to keep steadily on the watch.

Harry put in a lot of patient watching that day, and far into the night.

It was not all by the iron door, either.

Young King Brady managed to keep himself posted on the condition of things in the smoking-room.

He knew that high play was on, and he felt sure that sooner or later he would be called upon to act.

Harry gave the situation a lot of careful thought.

To wait until the disappearance was actually made and try to follow Suskins down into the Antarctic's hold Young King Brady felt would be decidedly dangerous.

He determined, therefore, to get into the hiding-place ahead of his man if possible.

This, of course, was taking big chances on Suskin's not coming at all, but going off in some different direction.

But then there was a risk all around.

Shortly after ten Young King Brady, who was now disguised in a rough tweed suit and by putting on a red wig and a bit of a red mustache, got a chance to look in at the door of the smoking-room when a man was coming out.

He saw by the excited faces and by the crowd about the card table that the play must be running high.

"How are they getting along in there?" he asked of the passenger who had just come out, using an assumed voice.

"Biggest on record, I fancy," was the answer. "That young Boston fool must have dropped some thirty thousand odd. But, look here, I don't remember to have seen you before."

"No," said Harry. "I've been seasick and kept my stateroom pretty close. Perhaps you never did see me before."

Thus saying, he moved away in the rain.

Passing the iron door he encountered the boatswain.

The night was dark and stormy, and there was no one near.

"Bo's'n," breathed Harry, in his natural voice.

"'Ello!" was the reply. "I know you by your voice, but I wouldn't never 'ave believed it. Are you a detective, boss?"

"That's what I am."

"Say, I'm glad of it. Them card sharps is a mean lot. I would not cry to see him pinched."

"Can we talk safely here?"

"Yes, for one moment, because it is so dark. What do you want? Didn't you understand my note?"

"Oh, I wanted to tell you that I was going in now."

"What for?"

"To lay for him when he comes down."

"Perhaps it's best, but the light has not been fixed yet and can't be."

"Never mind that. I have a dark lantern. I wanted to ask you if there was any danger of it's being seen."

"None at all."

"Well, I'll go on then."

"Suit yourself, sir. Good luck to ye, sir."

The bo's'n moved on his way, and Harry, making certain that no one was observing him, slipped through the iron door.

He carefully closed it behind him and stood for a moment after he had produced his dark lantern, so as to get his bearings.

A steep iron staircase lay ahead of him, guarded at the side by a rope.

It was a private entrance to the hold, to be used in case of fire among the cargo, so that a stream of water could be instantly turned on without alarming the passengers.

Harry hurried down the stairs and found himself up against another iron door.

This was unfastened, and upon passing through he found himself standing facing a vast pile of goods with a fire plug, and a coiled-up hose on his left.

"This is a good place to hide," thought Young King Brady. "Nothing could be better for his purpose or mine."

He looked about and found just the nook he wanted.

Crawling in behind a big case of goods which, instead of being under the general pile, stood by itself, he lay quietly down to watch and wait.

So far he had kept his dark lantern lighted, and he determined to do so until he heard the sound of footsteps on the stairs.

The wait seemed an interminable one.

It came at last, however.

The steamer had just given an extra roll when suddenly there appeared a ray of moving light under the crack of the door.

"Coming," muttered Young King Brady. "It is up to me now!"

Hurried footsteps were heard.

Then all at once the door came open and General Suskins, carrying much such a dark lantern as Harry had just extinguished, popped in.

"By thunder!" he exclaimed, in great excitement. "Great guns! It's too bad! It's rotten! Just to think of it! And after all my trouble, too! Oh, I could kill him for his carelessness! I could cut his heart right out."

These were the mildest of his expressions.

The man was sweating horribly.

He paced up and down the narrow enclosure, stamped his foot in rage, and acted altogether like a man who had gone off his head.

"What in the world ails him?" thought Young King Brady. "One would think that he had gone crazy. He

must have scooped in Wygant's roll, too, or he would not be here."

Harry could not make it out at all.

"So this is the wretched end of it all," Suskins was saying. "Here the dough is all gone, and I've got to keep cooped up in this wretched hole two days or more. All this for what? The pleasure of seeing that clumsy fool drop \$52,000 and over into the ocean, from which no power in the world can produce it again."

It was all out now.

"So between them they have lost their stealings," thought Young King Brady. "Well, here is certainly a pretty kettle of fish. However did it all come about? I don't believe it. West swiped the roll."

Suskins sat down on the very case behind which Young King Brady was hiding, and buried his face in his hands.

Then he groaned and groaned and groaned again.

Altogether Harry had scarcely ever seen a man so overcome.

At last he seemed to brace up to the situation to a certain extent.

"Well, there's no use in crying for spilled milk," he muttered. "It's gone, and I can't get it back again. Wouldn't I liked to have tumbled him after it, though."

"But there was no time," he added. "No time for anything but to carry out the programme as arranged. So much for trying to bilk the others. Well, after all, it don't pay."

He sprang up suddenly, and seizing his dark lantern, stepped in behind the case before Young King Brady knew what he was about.

Had Harry made some slight sound?

Possibly, although the boy was not aware of having done so.

Such another look of astonishment as appeared on the face of General Suskins as the light of the lantern fell full on Harry was never seen.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "Who the blazes are you?"

CHAPTER X.

WINFIELD WYGANT.

Old King Brady opened the door to see standing at the threshold no less a person than Winfield Wygant himself.

He looked pale, haggard, and distraint.

"May I come in, colonel?" he said. "I want to talk to you."

"Certainly you may come in, my boy," replied Old King Brady. "And if there is anything in the world I can do for you, count upon me every time."

"I don't know that you can do much," was the reply, as the door was closed, "but at least you can advise me. You have done that before, you know, and now I want you to do it again."

"I surely will, my boy. You can rely upon me. I am here to help you and for nothing else."

"Here to help me! Then you are not——"

"A spy, sent to follow you by the executors of your father's will?"

"No, I am not that. I am simply a detective sent to watch over you by your guardian, Mr. Allingworth, of Boston."

"What! Do you mean it?" Wygant cried.

"I do. My instructions were to let you lose your money to the card crooks, and then help you get it back again. Far from being the paid spy of your father's executors, my work is to help this affair from coming to their ears. Mr. Allingworth is your best friend, Winfield Wygant, although your treatment of him has been anything but what it ought to have been. Listen to this paragraph in his final letter of instruction sent to me after our interview in Boston."

And Old King Brady, drawing out a letter, read as follows:

"Do not let Winfield become too much discouraged. In case the card crooks, who will surely tackle him, prove too many for you, and succeed in holding the large sum of money he has with him, which will surely be lost at the poker-table, go to him, cheer him up, and say to him that I will advance him the cash to make good this loss rather than see his father's millions taken from him, providing he will go before a notary at London and take oath never to turn a card again."

"Oh, how I have wronged him!" cried Wygant, throwing up his hands. "Oh, the good old man!"

Tears came into his eyes, and he turned his head away.

"I've got him at last," thought Old King Brady, "but about the money I am greatly in doubt."

"Cheer up! Be a man," he said aloud. "With such friends as Mr. Allingworth behind you your life may yet be redeemed."

"He needs no oath. After this voyage I shall never touch a card again," said Wygant earnestly.

"What is your name?" he added. "Of course, that of Colonel Wygant was only assumed for the purpose of attracting my attention."

"That is all. It did not work as I had hoped it might. My name is Brady. I am from New York. Mr. Allingworth called at my office as soon as you determined to go to Europe. You were pointed out to me in Boston later. I have had you on my mind ever since."

"And a sad charge I have been, I suppose. Are you the famous Old King Brady?"

"I am."

"And the young fellow who has passed as your son is Young King Brady, of course?"

"He is."

"How differently things have turned out from what I expected. Do you know why I am here?"

"Advice, you said."

"No, for cash."

"Ah! You mistook me for a money lender?"

"I mistook you for a western millionaire with a passion for diamonds at first. When I thought you were a spy I still believed in your passion for diamonds."

"It is real."

"I should judge it must be. I was going to ask you to add this one to your collection, to give me \$1,000 on it, and keep the balance of its value to hold your tongue about the poker game."

"Ha! A bribe and an accommodation combined," said Old King Brady, receiving the handsome solitaire diamond ring, worth \$3,000 at least. "Who put you up to this?"

"Must I necessarily have been put up to it? Have I no ideas of my own?"

"Who put you up to it?" repeated Old King Brady, twirling the ring about.

"Dr. West."

"You have seen him since the game?"

"Oh, yes. He is in my stateroom now."

"He came to you?"

"Yes. You are entirely wrong in your idea about him. He's a kind-hearted man and a right-down good fellow. He had nothing to do with the game."

"You are sure of this?"

"Absolutely sure."

"Because he told you so?"

"Well, yes. But then he is a minister. He would scarcely lie."

"Minister he may once have been, scoundrel, card crook, and blackleg he surely is now. Of this I hold absolute proof."

"I'd like to see your proof."

"I can show it to you and will later. Why did you want to raise this money. May I ask?"

Wygant shifted about nervously.

"I don't have to take the oath till I get to London," he said. "The death of General Suskins has put it out of your power to get this money back. What if I could win it back with the money you no doubt can if you will advance me on my diamond?"

"I see, I see! Dr. West has proposed a quiet little poker game between himself and you in the stateroom, to give you a chance to make good your loss at his expense."

Wygant shook his head.

"How kind! How liberal! How do you know he has any money to lose?"

"How do I know? Why, I saw it with my own eyes. A roll as big as your head!"

"Ah!"

"Is that proof enough?"

"That he has the money—yes, I am willing to take your word for it. My own eyes are beginning to open. I am wondering if after all General Suskins was not really drowned."

"You are oversuspicious, Mr. Brady."

"We detectives learn to be suspicious. Let me tell you something, young man."

"Well?"

"Only a few nights ago General Suskins, Mr. Schneider, Dr. West, myself, and my partner all sat in the general's stateroom together, planning the raid on your purse, which has been successfully carried out."

"Mr. Brady!"

"Oh, it's so!"

"And West was right in with the rest of the gang?"

"Indeed he was! He is what is termed the 'walker,' and a very successful one he proved to be."

"Well, well! I am bound to believe you, of course. I must believe you. Tell me more? Is Senor Hernandez one of the card crooks, too?"

"He is. Senorita Hernandez gave my partner knockout drops, and stole his scarf-pin. She crept into this stateroom in the dead of night, tried to chloroform me, and was caught with my diamonds actually in her hands."

"It seems incredible! Oh, how I have been deceived."

"Indeed you have."

"But even that does not make Hernandez a card crook."

"He confessed to me with his own lips that he was one. Can you look for further proof?"

"I have no more to say, Mr. Brady. I am in your hands. Tell me what to do."

"Let me think ten minutes," replied Old King Brady. "While thinking I shall smoke a cigar, and do you smoke another. Silence now."

Old King Brady stretched out his long legs and puffed away in silence.

The ten minutes had passed, and four more were added to it before he spoke.

"Take back your ring," he then said: "Tell West that I repudiated the suggestion and said I was no pawnbroker, but that I would lend you \$1,000 on your note, because your name is the same as my own."

Wygant nodded.

It was easy to see that he was immensely pleased.

"You still hope to beat the card crook," said Old King Brady pityingly. "How little you know the world! Now what game do you suppose West is trying to play on you?"

"I can't imagine any game. If we play alone in my stateroom I can't see how he can get the best of me."

"So be it," said Old King Brady. "Take my \$1,000, pitch in and win or lose. It makes little difference. Tomorrow I'll tell you what to do next. You promise to follow my advice?"

"I do implicitly. I won't play this game if you say the word."

"You will play the game, because I want you to play it, and because by playing it you will help me to play my own little game, which is going to bring these card crooks to their milk. There's the money, Mr. Wygant. Never mind about the note. You can give me that later. Now, good-night."

"Good-night, and a thousand thanks"

"Thank Mr. Allingworth. One thing more—you will not drink another drop until we are safely through with this business?"

"I faithfully promise you that."

Wygant withdrew then.

Old King Brady waited half an hour, and then, putting on his great coat, went on deck in the rain.

It was still pouring and the sea was very rough.

He paced the deck several times in the vain hope of seeing something of Harry.

He did not appear, however, and at last Old King Brady went to bed to be awakened at seven o'clock by a smart rap on the stateroom door.

He sprang up, shot the bolt, and crawling back into his bunk, called, "Come in."

Once more Winfield Wygant.

He looked triumphant.

"There's your thousand dollars, Mr. Brady," he said, "and I am four more to the good."

"Yes," replied the detective, rolling up the bills. "Just so."

"What do you think now?"

"Of your poker-playing parson? It is not what I think, it is what I know."

"It was a fair game."

"He is fair game, and I mean to bag him, my boy. When does the next sitting come off?"

"This afternoon in the stateroom. I am to give him his revenge."

"You could not get him into the smoking-room, I suppose?"

"No; he won't go. He seems almost afraid to show himself on deck or at the table. He has ordered his breakfast sent to his room."

"And well he may be afraid. I begin to think the man has committed murder. You tell him that I want to come in on this next game."

"He won't like it."

"He won't dare to refuse."

"I'll tell him."

"All right. Leave me now. Hold no conversation with me except in here."

"Right," said Wygant, and he withdrew.

Old King Brady looked strangely white as he made his toilette.

"I'm afraid! I'm afraid!" he kept muttering; "and yet the boy knows his business. But what if that wretch of a parson should have found his chance to do them both? It is very strange that he should have the roll."

Old King Brady had no desire to go to the captain.

This, in fact, was the very last thing he wanted to do, for to arrest the card crooks and make Winfield Wygant's poker experiences public would be to destroy his chance to an enormous fortune, owing to the peculiar wording of his father's will.

Poker was and had long been Wygant's weakness, and his father, determined to break him of it, had worded his will in the peculiar manner already described.

Old King Brady went to breakfast filled with a thousand fears.

The morning wore on.
 Still no Harry, nor any sign of him.
 "I must see the boatswain," thought the detective.
 "This is to be endured no longer."
 But when he started to look for the man he found that another was in charge of his duties. It was the boatswain's watch below.
 "Patience, patience," muttered the old detective.
 It was still storming, although the wind had gone down somewhat.

For the first time that morning Old King Brady entered the smoking-room.

The bridge-whisters were hard at it, but the poker table was given up to new people, who sat around talking of the night before and the death of Suskins.

Not one of the card crooks were visible.
 "I must see West," thought the detective. "He alone can enlighten me about Harry, and I must know."

He hurried down into the cabin and rapped sharply upon the door of Dr. West's stateroom.

CHAPTER XI.

YOUNG KING BRADY BAGS HIS MAN.

Young King Brady, taken entirely by surprise, the movement of General Suskins being so sudden, pretended to be asleep.

There would have been no time to draw on the man, even if he had been disposed to do so, which he was not.

"Well, upon my word," muttered Suskins. "What does this mean? A spy! By heaven, he seems to be asleep. Perhaps he is a stowaway. I don't remember ever to have seen this fellow before."

He stood looking down at Harry, flashing his lantern full in the young detective's face."

"It must be a stowaway," he muttered. "That's what. He has crawled out from among the cargo. What is to be done?"

Presently he stirred Harry up with his foot.
 "Wake up!" he exclaimed. "Wake up, boy!"
 Harry opened one eye and stretched himself, blinking like an owl as the light was flashed upon him.

"What is it?" he gasped. "Am I caught at last? Say, captain, don't kill me! I'm only a poor chap trying to beat his way home."

"Stand on your feet," said Suskins. "How came you here?"

Harry wearily stood up.
 "Say, I stowed away in New York, don't yer know," he stammered, with his best London accent. "I'm only a poor lad who hain't got no friends nor nothink. I shipped to America hoping to get work, but I couldn't, don't yer know. Nothink doing nowhere, and h'everythink so bloomin' hell."

"What's your name?" demanded Suskins.

"Arthur Jones, sir. Say, you won't be too hard on a poor lad."

"I'm no ship's officer," replied Suskins, dryly. "I'm a stowaway myself."

"You, sir! Lawd, sir! How can that be, sir?"

"You are not bright, my boy, unless you can imagine circumstances in which it might pay a man to disappear."

"Oh, aye, sir. If you had done somethink crooked like."

"Or was suspected of it."

"Jest so, sir. It would be much the same."

"I expect to stay here until we make port. The bo's'n provided this place for me. He will bring me my meals and make everything as comfortable as he can for me. But what about you?"

"Oh, sir, I'm of no consequence. I'm not, indeed. Only a poor lad. I 'aven't 'ad a bite or a sup since yesterday, the provisions I fetched aboard with me being all gone. If I could be of any service to you now, and you could give me a bit to eat I should be very thankful, sir."

"Perhaps you can," said Suskins, almost eagerly. "But see here, you look very clean for a stowaway."

"Oh, well, sir, this is not 'alf a bad place, don't yer know; very clean here, sir. Then it's my 'abit to take good care of my clothes; but what can I do for you, sir! Please give it a name."

"Can you play cards?" asked Suskins abruptly.

"Oh, yes, sir."

"Can you play poker?"

"I can, sir. One of the sailors on the voyage out taught me 'ow."

"Then play with me to keep me from going mad down here, as I certainly shall otherwise."

"But I haven't any money, sir."

"No more have I. A son of a sea-cook whom I am going to put a knife into just as soon as we get ashore robbed me of all of mine; but I've got a pocket full of beans."

"Beans is all right, sir, when there is the money to back 'em, but when not, what then?"

"That will do," said Suskins. "Get up on the box here and we will start the game."

Of course it was a rick dressed as he was, but there was nothing else to do. There are men who are poker-mad.

Suskins the card crook was distinctly one of these.

One would have supposed that the man would have got enough of card playing in the way of business, but no, Suskins wanted to be playing poker all the time, and during what remained of that night and through the next morning Young King Brady found that out.

Twice the bo's'n appeared and brought food and drink.

He was no doubt considerably amazed to find Young King Brady and Suskins seated on the packing-case playing for beans.

Another thing which kept Suskins close at it was the fact that he was losing.

Suskins prided himself on his poker.

For once in his life he played a fair game, and for once

in his life he had met his match, for Young King Brady was a better poker player than he.

There was no limit to the game, and if the beans had been backed by dollars Young King Brady would have found himself many thousands to the good, and Suskins many thousands in debt for beans advanced.

Young King Brady rather lost the run of time, not daring to look at his watch.

He did not know how many hours they had been at it when at last Suskins threw down the cards and declared he would play no more.

"Sleep is what I want," he said. "Half an hour's sleep."

He flung himself down upon some old bagging, and was soon snoring.

Young King Brady started to improve his opportunity come at last.

His scheme was to creep out on deck, dodge down into the cabin, and let the old detective know how matters stood.

Of course it was a risk dressed as he was, but there was no chance to make a change, and it had to be done.

Harry crept to the door and glided up the iron stairs.

Well!

That ended it.

Either the bo's'n had gone back on him, or it happened by accident, but the door was locked.

Young King Brady tried his skeleton keys.

There was nothing doing with the peculiar English lock. To raise a disturbance would not do at all.

"The bo's'n will surely be with us soon," thought Harry. "Meantime Old King Brady will have to wait."

He returned to the fire hole to find Suskins still sleeping.

Young King Brady, pretty well worn out by it all, threw himself down upon the packing-case.

In a moment he was sleeping, too, and he only intended to sleep three minutes; and he only did sleep five when he was suddenly awakened by some one rudely shaking his shoulder.

He sprang up and saw General Suskins standing before him holding a red wig in his hand.

"Ah, you fraud!" he shouted. "You are a detective. I'm going to kill you!"

He flung down his wig and reached for his knife.

But Young King Brady was too quick for him.

"Not this trip, you don't," he cried, whipping out his revolver and covering the card crook.

"Drop it. Drop the knife," he hissed. "Drop it, or you're a dead man."

The knife fell to the floor.

"Up hands!" Harry persisted.

The hands went up.

Like most of his kind, Suskins was a coward as well as a bully. He did not relish such business as this.

"You are young Wygant," he snarled. "What does all this mean?"

"No, no! Young King Brady, the detective," replied Harry. "It means that you are my prisoner, General

Suskins, to be held until such time as I see fit to let you go."

"I surrender," said Suskins. "That scoundrel West has my revolver. I am at your mercy now."

"And your roll?" asked Harry.

"And my roll! Do you think it possible?"

"Ha!" said Young King Brady, lowering his revolver. "What will you give me, general, to turn the tables on West and recover your roll?"

"Anything you ask, even if it has to be the whole of it," replied Suskins eagerly.

In more senses than one Young King Brady had got his man

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Twice Old King Brady knocked on Dr. West's door before there came any answer.

"Who is there?" the doctor's voice demanded at last.

"It is I, Colonel Wygant. I want to speak to you, Dr. West," the detective replied.

The door was cautiously opened.

West looked pale and frightened.

That the man was a perfect coward Old King Brady already knew.

"I'm afraid of Hernandez and Schneider," he said in a whisper. "I am especially afraid of the Hernandez woman. She has been here three times this morning. She seems to think I pushed Suskins overboard and robbed him first. She actually came here and called through the door demanding her husband's share of the money. So absurd! Just as though I wasn't out my own share as well as the rest."

"Just so," said Old King Brady, seating himself on the stool. "And what about my share of the roll?"

"What do you mean? Have you got the same bee in your bonnet? Do you think I am a murderer and a thief?"

"I think you are any old thing that would best serve your purpose," replied Old King Brady, quietly, "and I know you have got Suskin's roll."

"You are entirely mistaken."

"Where did the money come from that you lost to young Wygant for the purpose of leading him on into the game to-day when you meant to skin him, of course?"

"That was my own money."

"Rats!"

"I'm giving it to you straight."

"I'm going to give it to you straight. You mean to skin Wygant all right, and you mean more."

"What more?"

"You mean to make him sign a poker note with which it is your intention to blackmail him out of a hundred thousand or so when you reach London. You know all about his father's strange will."

"Wygant, you're a wizard."

"No, doctor. I'm a man on the make, and I must be let into your little deal."

"You seem to have a remarkable faculty for getting into everybody's little deal," said West, sulkily. "I never saw such a man in all my life."

"I'm in this one all right," said the old detective, coolly lighting a cigar.

"Well, I suppose it has to be," sighed West.

"When does the game come off?"

"At three o'clock we begin."

"And the place?"

"Right here in my stateroom."

"All right, brother. I shall be on hand, and if I make it a winner for me no one gets away my roll, you bet."

"Still harping on that string," snorted the doctor. "You were never more mistaken in your life. If Suskins was alive he would confirm my words."

* * * * *

Just at that time Suskins was very much alive, for he was then playing poker for all he was worth, the time of his great discovery not having yet come.

Young King Brady's shrewdly-put questions held the card crook's attention at once, when the time did come and Harry turned the tables on his man so cleverly.

"Do you know anything? Do you really know anything about my roll?" he asked.

"Not personally, but I am satisfied that I know a man who does."

"Ah, I read your meaning. Your Colonel Wygant is nobody else than Old King Brady, the detective."

"Right."

"Are you after me?"

"Not at all."

"Who then?"

"An entirely different party, whose name I don't care to give."

"Oh, then what brought you down here?"

I got onto your curves, general, and thought I would like a share of that roll, which at the time I supposed you had. "I now believe that roll to be in the possession of Dr. West."

And you believe right, golhang it! I was to keep the roll. I started in to give West a hundred dollars, the ship lurched, he fell against me. 'Look out! You'll lose the roll!' he exclaimed, and then grabbed it. I thought I saw it go overboard with my own eyes, but I am satisfied now that West came the double shuffle on me, and has the roll safe in his pocket at the present time."

"I have no doubt you are right. There is but one thing to do, and that is to charge him with it boldly."

"Charge him with it! Why, I don't dare to leave this place till the steamer is docked at Liverpool. Captain Cleary would order me in irons as sure as a gun."

"Then I'll go for you," said Harry cheerfully. "I'll see Old King Brady, and between us we will get the roll."

"And where do I come in?"

"You will have to come out to come in, general. No doubt you and I could bluff the roll out of West and not bring Old King Brady into the deal at all."

"Haven't I just told you that I didn't dare to come out?"

I'm telling you now that I could make you up so that your own mother wouldn't know you, and so make it perfectly safe for you to come out."

"You could?"

"Sure I could."

"Try it then. It's a blame good idea."

"Do you try on that wig?"

"Why, it just fits me."

"Couldn't be better. Now may I shave off that goat's beard of yours and put on a false mustache?"

"My dear boy, the goat's beard can be removed without shaving," chuckled the general.

He put up his hand and off came the beard.

"Well," he said. "I'm something on disguises, too. I guess we can make this thing go. Trot out your false mustache."

Harry did so, and lent a hand in other ways.

In a few minutes he had General Suskins' appearance so altered that no one would have known him.

"Brady, you're a wonder," said the card crook. "I'm ready for action now just as soon as the bo's'n will condescend to open the door."

"Once I get him on deck he's mine," thought Harry. "He's like a jackass with a whisp of hay tied to his nose. To get that roll he'd take any risk, and go chasing it all over the world."

* * * * *

Leaving Dr. West's stateroom Old King Brady went straight to the purser's office and had a long interview with that officer.

"It shall all be done just as you wish, Mr. Brady," the purser said as they parted. "I am very glad you came. We don't like to have people robbed on board the Antarctic. Captain Cleary and I were talking over the situation less than an hour ago. We had you down for one of the gang, and we had about made up our mind to arrest you all as soon as the steamer touches port."

"There must be no arrests, for it would deprive this young fool of a fortune," said Old King Brady. "Thank you for your co-operation, purser. I knew that I could depend on you."

Three o'clock came, and Old King Brady knocked on the door of Dr. West's stateroom.

It was immediately opened by Winfield Wygant.

"Ah, colonel," he exclaimed. "Come right in. Are you going to join us in our little game?"

"That's the talk," replied Old King Brady. "The doctor has kindly consented to let me take a hand in."

"The more the merrier," said the doctor, with an attempt to look pleasant. "We may, however, put up a pretty stiff game."

"I think you will find me good for it," chuckled Old King Brady. "Shall we begin?"

All hands were agreeable, and the game was well under way when there came a knock on the door.

"Who in the world can that be?" growled West.

"Perhaps I had better open the door and see," said Old King Brady.

"No, no! Not on any account. I'm afraid. Oh, thunder! It is that woman again!"

"Dr. West! Dr. West!" came the shrill call through the keyhole.

"Hush! Keep perfectly quiet. She may go away," breathed the doctor, very much disturbed.

But Miss Hernandez did not go away.

"You are in there and I know it," she called. "You old fraud, open the door. If you don't I'll expose you. You old card crook. I'll yell right out what you are. Open the door."

Old King Brady was choking with laughter.

Even Wygant, who had almost no sense of humor, could not keep back a smile.

"Oh, if she would only go away," gasped West.

"Open the door," called Miss Hernandez. "I want my husband's share of that young idiot's money. You have got Suskin's roll, and I know it. I believe you murdered him. I'll put it up to the captain that you did, anyhow, if you don't open the door."

West threw down the cards in despair.

"The woman is crazy," he whispered. "What on earth am I to do?"

"She is giving you rather a hard character, doctor," said Wygant. "Of course she must be crazy, though."

"There she goes," said Old King Brady. "Someone coming. That's what scared her off."

A rustle of skirts had been heard outside.

A moment later and there came a low knock on the door.

"Only a trick. She's back again," said West.

"No, no! It's someone else," whispered Old King Brady. "Who is there?"

He called out loud, and the answer came in Harry's voice:

"I want to speak with Dr. West for a moment, if you please."

"Thank God!" thought Old King Brady. "He sprang up, and shooting the bolt, threw back the door."

Young King Brady in his usual dress, followed by a tall man with red hair and mustache, entered.

West sprang to his feet, for he recognized Suskins in spite of his disguise.

Now Harry had his little plan all arranged, but it did not work out at all, for he had not expected to find Old King Brady and young Wygant there, nor did Suskins give him a chance.

The General saw that he was recognized, and with a roar of rage sprang at the bogus parson's throat.

"Give up, you thief!" the general shouted, pinning the

parson against the partition. "The roll never went overboard, and you know it. Give up, I say!"

Old King Brady sprang up from the little table upon which the cards lay spread out.

"Here's the joker of this game!" he cried, drawing his revolver. "Give up, certainly, doctor, but give me the roll."

Young King Brady drew his revolver also.

Young Wygant, who was sitting on the edge of the berth, sprang to his feet.

For at the same instant the door opened and in walked Captain Cleary and Purser Bond.

"Here are your card crooks!" cried the captain. "Give up what you robbed this young fool of, whichever one of you has it, or into irons you go straight out now."

Suskins let go his hold and slunk into a corner.

Dr. West, thrusting his hand into his pocket, produced an immense roll of bills.

"Take it, Old King Brady, and give the boy his money," said the captain, "and let there be no more of this business on my ship."

In due time the Antarctic arrived at Liverpool, and on her return trip the Bradys sailed in her back to America.

They had done all that they were hired to do, and had done it successfully; and what was more, were well paid for their work, young Wygant himself rewarding them liberally out of the money recovered from the card crooks.

Before parting with the detectives the young man went before a notary and took oath never to play cards again.

Let it be hoped that he may keep it, and inherit his father's millions.

One thing is certain, he will never forget his experience on the Antarctic with THE BRADYS AND THE CARD CROOKS.

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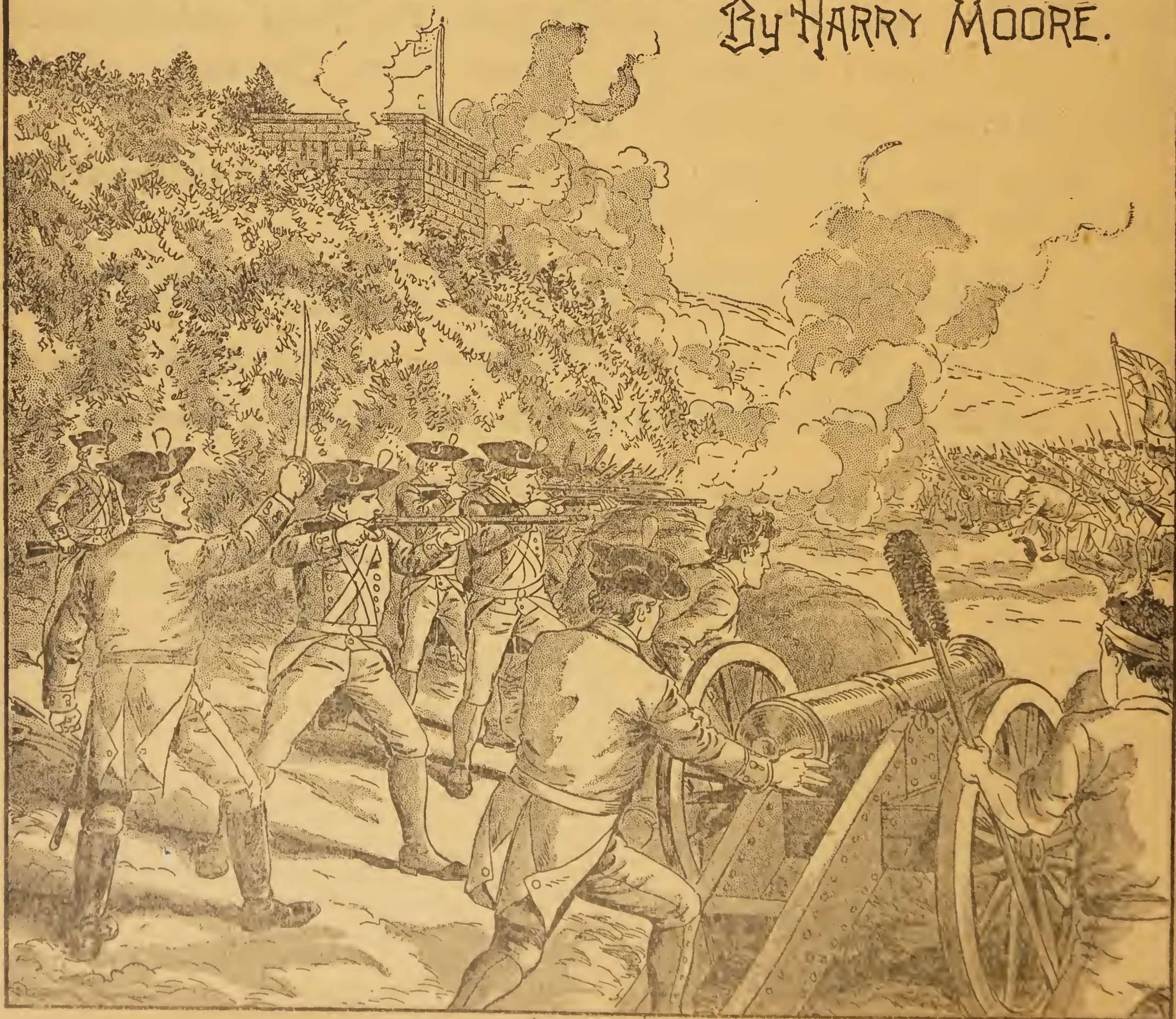
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